

FLORIN JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE
Oral History Project
California Civil Liberties Public Education Program Grant

Oral History Interview

with

CHIZU IYAMA
AND
ERNEST SATOSHI IYAMA

April 28, 2000
May 25, 2000
El Cerrito, California

By Joanne Iritani

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Florin JACL Oral History Project

Japanese American Citizens League, Florin Chapter

MISSION STATEMENT

To collect and preserve the historical record of the multigenerational experience of Japanese Americans and others who befriended them. The books produced will enhance the California State University, Sacramento/Japanese American Archival Collection (CSUS/JAAC) housed in the CSUS Archives for study, research, teaching and exhibition. This unique collection of life histories provides a permanent resource for the use of American and international scholars, researchers and faculty, as well as a lesson for future generations to appreciate the process of protecting and preserving the United States Constitution and America's democratic principles.

PREFACE

The Florin JACL Oral History Project provides completed books and tapes of Oral Histories presented to the interviewed subjects, to the California State University, Sacramento/Japanese American Archival Collection (CSUS/JAAC), and to the Florin JACL Chapter. Copyright is held by the Florin JACL Chapter and California State University, Sacramento. Photocopying is limited to a maximum of 20 pages per volume.

This project will continue the mission of the Florin JACL Oral History Project which began in 1987 and recognized the necessity of interviewing Japanese Americans: "We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their seventies, eighties and nineties. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness." This same urgency to conduct interviews was felt by the North Central Valley JACL Chapters of French Camp, Lodi, Placer County, and Stockton in 1997-98 as a consortium joining the Florin Chapter in obtaining funding from the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund (CLPEF). And again, in 1999-2000, under the Florin Chapter banner, more life histories were told with the generous funding from the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program (CCLPEP).

The Oral Histories in the Japanese American Archival Collection relate the personal stories of the events surrounding the exclusion, forced removal and internment of American citizens and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry. There is a wide variety of interviews of former internees, military personnel, people who befriended the Japanese Americans, Caucasians who worked in the internment camps and others, whose stories will serve to inform the public of the fundamental injustice of the government's action in the detention of the Japanese aliens and "non-aliens" (the government's designation of U.S. citizens), so that the causes and circumstances of this and similar events may be illuminated and understood.

The population of those who lived through the World War II years is rapidly diminishing, and in a few years, will altogether vanish. Their stories must be preserved for the historians and researchers today and in the future.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER

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Joanne, a Poston Camp Internee, is past president of Florin JACL, Education chair, and retired special education teacher with a master's degree from California State University, Bakersfield.

She and her husband, Frank, are authors of *Ten Visits Revised*, which is a guidebook to the ten Japanese American relocation centers.

INTERVIEW TIME AND PLACE

April 28 and May 25, 2000
Home of Chizu and Ernie Iiyama
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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs were obtained from Chizu and Ernie Iiyama

TYPING AND EDITING

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TAPES AND INTERVIEW RECORDS

Copies of the bound transcript and the original tapes will be kept by Florin Japanese American Citizens League and in the University Archives Library, California State University, Sacramento, 2000 University Drive, Sacramento, California 95819.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

CHIZU IYAMA

Chizu Iiyama is a Nisei woman living in El Cerrito, California. She was born on November 14, 1921 in San Francisco, the fifth girl in a family of seven children. Her father was Motoji Kitano, a Japanese immigrant from Oita, Japan who arrived in San Francisco in 1906. Her mother was a picture bride from the same area who came in 1912 to San Francisco.

When her father first came to the United States, he was a farm worker, following the crops. He saw more opportunities in the States as compared to Japan and decided to become a permanent resident. He saved his money, leased a hotel in Chinatown in San Francisco and wrote to his family to find him a wife.

Her mother, Kou Yuki, was a schoolteacher. She married in San Francisco at the age of 24. Her father had a third grade education.

Chizu remembers hard economic times, when her family was poor. But she remembers her childhood as a good time with parents who cared. As the youngest of five girls, with two boys below her in age, she was brought up by her sisters. They prepared her for kindergarten and paved the way for her success in school. Like many Japanese American children she did well in school, skipping two grades.

The Japanese families in Chinatown formed a close, friendly community and they sponsored a Japanese school, Kyowa Gakuen. They wanted their children to learn about their culture as well as the Japanese language. Chizu attended from kindergarten through high school. She enjoyed Japanese school for its social activities, learning Japanese dances and songs, but wished she had been more serious about the Japanese language.

In high school, her circle of friends was almost all Nisei. Because adolescence meant parties and dates, most Nisei were in their own groups. But the Japanese Students Club, the YWCA, the Japanese school and community provided activities to meet their needs. She remembers her adolescence as being fun despite some problems with her parents regarding American dating patterns.

At the age of 16 Chizu entered the University of California at Berkeley. Attending college was a wonderful experience, and her studies in Psychology and Liberal Arts opened up a whole new world for her. She worked her way through college, first as schoolgirl, later on campus. In between semesters she worked at the Japanese pavilion at the San Francisco World's Fair, and in the Japanese-owned stores in Chinatown.

She was a senior at the University when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 setting in motion the events which led to the incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans in detention camps during World War II. Her father was picked up by the

FBI because he was prominent in the Japanese community. He was later released and sent to join his family in Utah.

Her family was ordered to go to Santa Anita racetrack on April 7, 1942, and she received her B. A. diploma from Cal while living in a horse stall. She was appointed a co-supervisor of Recreation. Santa Anita eventually grew to 18,000 inmates.

They were transferred to a permanent camp at Topaz, Utah. She served in the Social Service Department, where she met Ernie Iiyama of the Housing Department. She met members of the East Bay Young Democrats who gave her an understanding of current events and the war.

She left Topaz in April 1943 under a student leave; Ernie left as a volunteer for the U. S. Army. They got married on July 27, 1943 in Chicago, then relocated to New York City where daughter Patricia was born in 1945. Ernie and Chizu were both active in the Japanese American Committee for Democracy.

In 1948 they moved to Chicago where Chizu received a M. A. in Education and Child Development at the University of Chicago. She worked as the Assistant Director of the Chicago Resettlers Committee helping Issei and Nisei find jobs, housing, and providing social services and activities. Her son, Mark, was born on November 10, 1953. She was active in the Chicago JACL, the YWCA, PTA, and the Progressive Party.

They made their final move to the Bay Area. They lived in Richmond where Laura was born on September 16, 1956. Ernie worked as a machinist, then a computer operator. Chizu was employed by the local school district as a Parent Educator, later was head of the Early Childhood Education Department of Contra Costa College. She helped to organize a Children's' Council and the Therapeutic Nursery School. She was active in the Richmond, then El Cerrito Human Relations Committee, Contra Costa JACL, and the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations.

She retired in 1987 and became very active in the Japanese American community--with the local and district JACL as Chair of the Education Committee, nationally as Chair of the Women's Concerns Committee. She was on the board of the Japanese American Historical Society, chaired the exhibit on the history of Japanese American women, worked on many exhibits and teachers' guides. She attended the United Nations Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995. She spoke extensively at universities, schools, and community organizations about her experiences during WW 11, and its implications in terms of civil liberties.

At the present time she is on the Board of "Nikkei Heritage," a publication of NJAHS [National Japanese American Historical Society], and heads their Oral History Committee.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

ERNEST SATOSHI IYAMA

Ernest Satoshi Iiyama was born in Oakland, California on January 4, 1912. He had a brother, Susumu, who was two years older. His father, Minezuchi, came from Hiroshima at the turn of the century and his mother, Kimino, came later in an arranged marriage.

His father started out as a peddler of food and then opened a store on Webster Street in what is now Chinatown in Oakland. He moved twice after that and improved on the location each time. He gave the second location to Ernie's uncle (mother's older brother) and his wife.

In 1920 his parents decided to sell the store and return to Japan because his grandfather on his father's side wanted him to return home because he was getting old. His father, being the eldest son, felt obligated to go home. Ernie and his brother had to learn the Japanese language as well as the customs of Japan, and his mother had to get used to living with her in-law parents. So everyone had to make adjustments.

Ten years later both Ernie and his brother, Susumu, graduated from chugakko (high school) in 1930.

In 1930 Ernie decided to return to America and work his way through the university. So he took a steamer to San Francisco and was detained for several weeks on Angel Island until his aunt (Furukawa), as his sponsor, could get him off the Island.

He worked at a friend's grocery store and went to Oakland Technical High School for one year before entering the University of California at Berkeley and majored in Electrical Engineering. While at Cal he got acquainted with people who were in the Young Democrats of California and learned about civil rights and equal rights of people. This was the turning point in his life.

In 1934 he helped organize the Oakland Chapter of the JACL. He ran out of money so he stopped going to Cal and started to work at various jobs.

In the meantime he helped organize the Nisei Young Democrats of the East Bay. He was a delegate to the American Youth Congress which was sponsored by Eleanor Roosevelt. After passing an examination he got a civil service job at the County Clerk's Office at the Alameda County Court House.

In May 1942 he was interned at the Tanforan Race Tracks. He was elected to the camp council while living in a horse stall.

In September 1943 he was sent to Topaz and became Head of the Housing Department, and was later elected to the Camp Council and elected as its Executive Secretary.

In 1943 the government issued a questionnaire, asking camp inmates to answer a loyalty oath for purposes of granting leaves and at the same time, requesting volunteers for the U. S. Armed Forces. Ernie volunteered to serve in the Army, but came down with pneumonia and was not accepted.

He left Topaz and married Chizu in Chicago. They then went to New York City and became active in the Japanese American Committee for Democracy.

In 1948 they returned to Chicago with daughter Patti. Chizu worked at the Resettlers Committee. Both participated in the Progressive Party. Ernie became active in his union, the United Electrical Workers of America, and was elected as a steward; eventually as shop chairman (chief steward) of his plant. His son, Mark, was born at this time.

In 1955 they left for California. Ernie got a job as a machinist in Berkeley, California. Chizu and Ernie joined Contra Costa JACL. His third child Laura was born in 1956.

During the sixties they both participated in the campaign to repeal Title II with Edison Uno and Ray Okamura.

In 1962 Ernie became a computer technician. Ernie and Chizu joined NCRR (National Coalition for Redress and Reparations) and were very active in the redress movement. Ernie worked with the ALC (Asian Law Caucus) to get redress for Alameda County workers and with the *Fred Korematsu Coram Nobis* case.

Ernie was active in many organizations including the National Japanese American Historical Society, serving on the Human Relations Committee of the Richmond School District, and helping to organize the Human Relations Commission of El Cerrito.

At age 88, he is still an activist. He and his wife participated in lobbying efforts for Latin American Japanese redress in 1999, and they still speak at schools and community events about the Japanese American experience during World War II.

[SESSION 1, APRIL 28, 2000]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A]

IRITANI: I am Joanne Iritani and today's date is April 28; the year is 2000, and today I am at the home of Chizu and Ernie Iiyama to interview them in El Cerrito [California]. I have asked Chizu and Ernie to permit me to interview them because they are activists in the Bay Area and every place I go, to every session of anything in this area, I seem to see them. And so I thought their information and their background should be of interest to people interested in the Japanese American experience. And so, Chizu, where I want to start is way back with your parents' experience--your recollection of whatever they told you. Would you like to start with that?

C. IIYAMA: Yes. My father was born in Oita in Japan and he came from a poor farming family. He had a third-grade education and then immediately was sent to his uncle's house to help because they didn't have any boys in the family. He came to the United States because they were poor, and he saw America as a land of opportunity.

IRITANI: And what year was that?

C. IYAMA: 1906. He came at the time of the fire.¹ He was in Oakland at the time and saw the fire going on in San Francisco. He worked for a long time as a farm itinerant laborer and went from place to place. Years later we took him to the wine country, and he talked about working in a winery for about one week, but he found that he didn't make any money because he had to pay so much for his room and board. So he quit after one month. But he did go up and down the coast--worked on the crops as it came up. He had a very difficult time. I better switch over to my mother. Now, my mother is also from the same area. She had a high school education and was a school teacher in Japan. She was teaching when my father's mother in the same village and my mother's mother were washing clothes in the stream. They were talking and my father's mother said that he had written that he would like to get married and settle down. My mother's mother thought that might be a good opportunity for my mother, Kou. And so they got together. Now, my mother says that before her marriage she had an opportunity--she had a choice of two men.

IRITANI: Oh!

C. IYAMA: One was from the village from a wealthy family and the other one was my father who lived in California. And so she went to a fortune teller and the

¹ On April 18, 1906 a heavy earthquake shook San Francisco. The first shock damaged the water system and as a result, the fires that broke out could not be controlled.

fortune teller said, after looking at the names, "I think you could do much better going out to California."

IRITANI: Wow!

C. IYAMA: And so she came out because of a fortuneteller's advice.

IRITANI: And what year was that?

C. IYAMA: And that was in 1911. She came as a picture bride because she had never seen my father. They did exchange pictures and her name was put . . .

IRITANI: Did she talk about the fact as a picture bride she was married in Japan then?

C. IYAMA: She didn't say that, but we assume that she was married and then came over and then married again. I think they put their name in the family register in Japan and then came out. She talked about the journey. She was a lot more verbal than my father. She had some friends who came to the U. S. at the same time, or she made friends with some of the women who were in the same boat. She spoke about Mrs. . . .

IRITANI: Is that Mrs. A?

C. IYAMA: Yes. Mrs. A was one of her friends in the boat and they were served artichokes . . .

IRITANI: Oh [LAUGHTER]

C. IYAMA: And they didn't know how to eat an artichoke. They didn't know what an artichoke was. And Mrs. A says, "Oh, I know all about it; I could eat it."
And she showed them how to eat it and she ate the whole thing.

IRITANI: [LAUGHTER]

C. IYAMA: And they couldn't figure out how she could eat anything so difficult. So then my mother said they didn't try to eat it. But they credited her with bravery. [LAUGHTER] And then she talked also about two women who had the pictures of their prospective men. They looked down and tried to match them with the pictures of the men. They were at Angel Island². They couldn't match the pictures with the men and finally came to the conclusion that what they had were really old men (pictures when they were younger).

IRITANI: [LAUGHTER]

C. IYAMA: And so these two women refused to get off the boat . . .

IRITANI: Oh, really!

C. IYAMA: Refused to go out and my mother said the two men were honorable enough to pay for their passage to go back home to Japan . . .

IRITANI: Oh, really!

C. IYAMA: . . . which was unusual. She said she saw this young man who was going to be her husband. He was apart from everybody else, throwing rocks, skimming it over the water all by himself. She thought, well, that's going to

be her husband. [LAUGHTER] [She] wasn't quite sure about him because he was separate from the group. But she did come out and they did get married. He took her to one of the Japanese clothing shops in San Francisco and got her some western clothes. She got married in western clothes. (She spoke to me somewhat, but she really spoke to my sisters who are older than I. I think by the time I came--I'm the fifth girl. By the time I came, she was just kind of tired out. [LAUGHTER] So she did a lot of talking with my sisters, especially with my third sister who went to Japan with her later on.) Just before marriage my father stopped being a farm laborer and had accumulated enough money so that he could open a hotel. He leased a place in Chinatown in San Francisco so that immigrants who were coming from Japan could have a place to stay. They developed a little Japanese colony in Chinatown. I grew up there. My father moved several times, and the hotel that I remember was called [INAUDIBLE] Kitano Hotel--his name. The hotel catered to lower-income people, and I could remember a lot of Afro-American men and women who lived there as well as Asians and Filipinos and some whites. It was a very strange environment because some of the residents were on welfare and didn't go out at all during the day. We were [INAUDIBLE] surrounded by people of color. And they were all very kind to us. They looked upon us with a lot of affection. We were a family of seven children, and most of the tenants didn't have

² Angel Island: Island in San Francisco Bay; formerly Immigration Detention Center.

children. Some of them were not married. And so we provided, I think, some sense of family to them. I remember the tenants gave us names because Japanese names were too difficult. My oldest sister, they called Ruby; my second sister was Bessie; and my third sister was Mary; and then my sister Sadako was Lily, and I was Lucy. These names were more prevalent in the black community. My experience living in that hotel was positive and negative. Negative, of course, in that it was so run-down, and we had to share a bathroom with the tenants on the first floor. Our kitchen was a little--I guess it was a closet, and my mother made it become a kitchen. I mean we were really poverty-stricken. But when you are child, this is your reality--you don't know . . .

IRITANI: You don't know.

C. IYAMA: Everybody else was poor, and when we went to other peoples' houses, they looked just like ours--very strange. But we had, I would say, a very good childhood. My parents were not demonstrative like most Japanese immigrants, but you knew they cared for you. I could remember, for example, going to school--elementary school--if it's raining my father would walk six or seven blocks with umbrellas for all of us and he would pick us up. When I was young, I used to sing a lot. I used to be featured in all these little plays and assemblies, and my mother and father would always come to

them. I used to lead little orchestras and stuff like that, and they would encourage us in all these activities. My sisters were all very smart.

IRITANI: Would you like to name your sisters? And years of their age?

C. IYAMA: OK. My oldest sister was Toshi--shall I give her married name?

IRITANI: You could give her married name.

C. IYAMA: OK. Toshi Yamasaki and she was born on March 20, 1914. My sister Kiyo Yamashita was born on October 26, 1916. Then Masako Saito born on June 1, 1918; and then Sadako Kawaguchi born on April 7, 1920; my brother Tamio Kitano born April 15, 1924; and my brother Haruo Kitano born on the 14th of February 1926. These dates revive a lot of memories for me because we went to the concentration camp on my sister's birthday. My brother Harry was a Valentine baby--easy to remember. And I think when I look back at this, my mother came in 1912.

IRITANI: While you were young and you said you did all of these performances. That was at school?

C. IYAMA: Yeah. At Jean Parker School.

IRITANI: Jean Parker--that was in Chinatown?

C. IYAMA: It was a little bit out--it was between Chinatown and Italian town. So there were a lot of Italian children as well. I guess what was particularly fun for us as children was because we had so many sisters and brothers. We used to put on all kinds of dramatic presentations. My sister Kiyo--my second

sister--who never saw a ballet in her life taught me some ballet steps.

[LAUGHTER] The only clothing we had that was pretty were petticoats because it had little laces at the bottom. They were our costumes. And we would dance. My sister would say, "Corkscrew, corkscrew."

[LAUGHTER] My sister Toshi would play the piano, and we'd put on a little. . . .

IRITANI: She was playing the piano?

C. IYAMA: Yes, all my sisters had piano lessons, but when I came along, the money ran out. The depression really hit my parents hard. And we had an old-fashioned piano and an audience. There were the Japanese men who were here without their families who were like our uncles. We would put on performances for them, or for our parents, or for ourselves.

IRITANI: They didn't live in the . . .

C. IYAMA: They lived in the hotel . . .

IRITANI: They did.

C. IYAMA: They lived in the hotel and they were very kind to us. Some had families in Japan and missed their children. So they would take us out places like to the countryside, or fishing. We never would have gone otherwise because our parents didn't have a car. We have some pictures of some of those places that they took us to. But it was a source of fun. We did a lot of things that I'm sure that children today never do. We played a lot of games with each

other and were very close. We always relied upon each other, and we always helped each other. And I remember when we went into camp in Santa Anita and people next door kept saying, "Gee, you people never fight." And we didn't. We never fought physically. When we were children, we had disagreements, but my mother always said, "We don't hurt people with our tongue and we don't hurt people with our hands."

IRITANI: Oh, that's very good!

C. IYAMA: We had a very happy childhood despite the fact that we were poor. We also had a lot of friends. The Japanese families in Chinatown bonded together because there were not too many of us. My father's hotel had a space for a Japanese language school, so he leased it to Kimon Gakuen supported by the Japanese parents in Chinatown. It was right within our hotel complex--two large rooms, and it became the center not only to teach language but of many social activities.

IRITANI: Were most of the teachers living in that area?

C. IYAMA: There were some teachers who came from Japan. I remember two different teachers that we had and Ichiyo sensei³ was one of them.

IRITANI: What was the name?

C. IYAMA: Ichiyo.

IRITANI: I-C-H:-I-Y-O?

³ Sensei: teacher.

C. IYAMA: Yes, Ichiyo sensei we used to call her. The second one was Yukawa sensei but Ichiyo sensei tried to teach us Japanese through songs and plays. I could remember when we would go to Oakland to a Japanese radio station and broadcast our plays and songs. It was so much fun going on the ferryboat and at night--coming back at night it's dark and spooky and we would play Hide and Go Seek. Looking at it now, I think one of us could have fallen over and splashed into the bay and no one would have known.

[LAUGHTER] But, you know, Issei⁴ were pretty lax about safety. I think I would have hesitated to take a group of school kids and let them roam around on the boat. I really enjoyed dramatics. I remember at one time as a child I thought I would like to be an actress, but then I ended up with many ideas of what I would like to be.

IRITANI: About the Japanese language school, all of you attended?

C. IYAMA: Yes, that's right.

IRITANI: Everyday after school?

C. IYAMA: Everyday after school. You would never know it when we speak our Japanese. [LAUGHTER] We've forgotten it all. Our teacher was so interested in putting on plays we didn't get the basics--basic Japanese. We knew songs. We could sing a lot of Japanese songs, which we remember to

⁴ Issei: First generation; a Japanese who emigrated to the United States after the Oriental Exclusion Proclamation of 1907 and was thus ineligible by law, until 1952, to become a U. S. citizen.

this day, but we didn't get the basics--we didn't get kanji.⁵ We knew hiragana⁶ and katakana.⁷ I could read those very easily but kanji was very difficult. The other thing that that school had which really was for me a source of pleasure is that they had volumes of books called the *Book of Knowledge*.

IRITANI: Oh, yeah.

C. IYAMA: It's like an encyclopedia.

IRITANI: Right.

C. IYAMA: And I remember just reading through the many volumes. It was such an eye opener for me. I loved reading. I learned how to read because my sisters taught me how to read before I went to school. We used to play "school." We had books, bring the chairs over, and we would make believe we were children at school. By the time we got to school, we knew school behavior, what's expected. And I always credit my sisters for really helping us go through school. They were just lovely.

IRITANI: You were born in 19 . . .

C. IYAMA: '21.

IRITANI: '21. You were the fifth girl--fifth child.

C. IYAMA: That's right.

IRITANI: No wonder your older sisters really . . .

⁵ Kanji: Chinese characters

⁶ Hiragana: Roundish Japanese letters.

C. IYAMA: Oh, they were so nice. I was always like ga-sa ga-sa.⁸ My mother used to say, "Mata ga sa ga sa. I was very active. I tell everyone I can't help it. I was like that since I was a child. [LAUGHTER] My mother used to say, "Your hair looks like a bird's nest." Because I didn't comb it well. But, again, the things that they criticized me on were not anything big. My parents were very glad because we all did well in school like most Japanese kids and if I didn't get an "A," they would ask why I didn't get an "A." But we did well. The teachers liked us very much. We were poor and when it was milk time my teachers put me to the juice patrol. I would give the juice out to everybody and I had one for myself. So the teachers really looked after us. I think those hakujin⁹--Caucasian teachers were really delightful. We really liked them.

IRITANI: And your classes were very diverse.

C. IYAMA: Yes, diverse. We had--we didn't have any Blacks that I could remember until I went to junior high school, but until then we had Japanese, Chinese, and Italian kids. Then I went to high school.

IRITANI: That was also in the area?

C. IYAMA: Yes. I went to Galileo High School, which is in Italian town.

IRITANI: I see.

⁷ Katakana: Squarish Japanese letters.

⁸ *Ga sa, ga sa*: This term is not defined in the English-Japanese dictionary. Applying *gasa-gasa* to Chizu Iiyama, the term can be defined as one who is an activist, one who does multi tasks quickly and efficiently, person with a quick, intelligent mind; lively, quick in physical movement.

C. IIYAMA: It's pretty far but, again, we were poor. My mother gave us money --they had script for students for carfare, but to make it last, we used to walk a lot. So we would walk home from school, and now I think it was a great idea because it keeps you trim. But in those days, "Oh my, we got to walk. Other people, how lucky they are, they can take the car or they could take the muni." But, again, poverty really didn't hurt us. In fact, in things like food, my mother used to make things stretch, so we didn't have too much meat. When you look at it, it was a good diet--a lot of vegetables. We used to eat a lot of Japanese food. Once a month was a big treat for us because my mother would say, "Well, it's so-and-so's birthday. What would you like to eat?" All of us wanted to eat chicken. Now-a-days, chicken, you know
[LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: [INAUDIBLE]

C. IIYAMA: So we would ask for chicken.

IRITANI: Isn't that something.

C. IIYAMA: Yeah, but we would look forward to it. We lived in Chinatown and we got to know our neighbors. There was a very nice Reverend family across our street. We were in contact with them for a long time, but we've lost the contact. But they were, again, very lovely people. Mary was the oldest one--same age as my sister Tish. To show you the extent of our ambition, we used to look at Mary because Mary had a job in one of the expensive stores--

⁹ Hakujin: Caucasian

-I. Magnin's in San Francisco, and she was the elevator girl. She always looked so nice and we used to say, "Gee, we could be an elevator girl!" And then we added, "Yeah, but you've gotta be pretty." [LAUGHTER] Because she was so attractive. My sisters all worked at Grand Avenue.

IRITANI: When--after they finished high school?

C. IYAMA: After high school. We all went through high school and my sisters all did well. My oldest sister was not encouraged to go on to college. At that time girls were not encouraged to go to college. But my second sister was very bright--my sister Kiyo. Her teacher called my mother and said, "She needs to go to college." Those teachers were really good when you think of it. I wonder how many of today's teachers would call people up and tell them they should send their kids to college. But she called and I think Mrs. Lyons was her name.

IRITANI: Lyons?

C. IYAMA: L-Y-O-N-S. She urged my sister to go to college. She went to University of California and graduated in 1938. She was the one who really encouraged me to go on to college too. My teachers called my mother and suggested college. My sister Kiyo was the one who really pushed it with my mother, because she was going to U. C. and she realized how important it was.

IRITANI: What did she do after she graduated?

C. IYAMA: She graduated in '38. I started college in '38. My sister was very pretty-- she's pretty in a very Japanese style way, and she's very soft-spoken. She could be somebody from Japan. She was my mother's favorite. We knew that, but we weren't upset about it. We always asked Kiyo, for example, if we wanted to get cookies or something, to ask Mom. My mother used to pick up milk and cookies and she would get a great big bag. She would stash it away where we couldn't find it, because with seven children it could disappear so quickly.

IRITANI: Right! Right!

C. IYAMA: So she would stash it away. And we would ask my sister Kiyo if she would ask Mama if we could have some cookies. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: You had to go through the line.

C. IYAMA: That's right. She would go and ask my mother and my mother would say, "OK," and Kiyo would bring a bunch of it and give it to us.

IRITANI: Oh, wow!

C. IYAMA: None of us really felt upset because she was the favorite because she was so nice. I was my father's favorite for a while. My father used to love to sing when he was a kid. And I was given the opportunity in elementary school that he didn't have. And so he enjoyed that very much. In fact, when I go into my experience in camp, there was a time when I really put my parents in a difficult situation. At that time, my sisters said that my father said,

"Well, I know it's hard now. But I could remember when Chizu was a little girl and she was so cute." [LAUGHTER] He could remember my singing and dancing. I thought those things were good memories for him, so that he could hold on to it at a time when life was tough for us in camp. But going back to elementary school or high school . . .

IRITANI: When your sister graduated from college . . .

C. IYAMA: What did she do? She got a job with a Japanese--at that time the Takarazuka came. They had a . . .

IRITANI: Dance troupe.

C. IYAMA: Yes. A dance troupe came to the United States in 1938. And they were looking for somebody who could speak at the beginning of the performance and kind of give them, I guess . . .

IRITANI: Like an introduction?

C. IYAMA: Yes, introduction of the dances and what it meant and present the principal dancers. They wanted somebody from the University. My sister just graduated. My father brought her over and she got the job. And so she went off for a year, and she really had a very different experience. When she came back we were just really excited because she would talk about the individual stars, she would show us pictures. It was kind of like Hollywood. It was show business. Everyone liked my sister. She talked about the petty jealousies of the people in that troupe and everything.

IRITANI: You got all the inside dope.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, that's right. We got all the inside gossip.

IRITANI: That was a tour in the United States.

C. IYAMA: In the United States, and so she went all over the United States with them.

And then when she came back, she met some people from Mitsubishi, and one of the men in the Mitsubishi was her future husband.

END TAPE 1, SIDE A}

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B}

C. IYAMA: Anyway, it was Susumu Yamashita, and he was unusual. Not only did he have a good job and made money, but he was also considered pretty high in the Japanese society at the time. He had his MBA [Master of Business Administration] from Harvard [University]. Nobody ever talks about class differences in the Japanese American community, but they were there. And I know that my mother always aspired to be part of the genteel class, you know, the highest class. People like Yoshiko Uchida's parents and the Togasakis--they were the upper class of the Japanese American community in the Bay area. They were people who had a university education in Japan, had high positions, were doctors, newspaper editors, etc. They had a totally different social life as compared to my parents who were from the working class. My mother was an elementary school teacher in Japan. She was very articulate--could speak and write very well. My father could not.

And--but they were very active in the main Japanese community which consisted primarily of people from lower-middle-class and middle-class people. My sister Tish was a salesgirl and she got married to Frank Yamasaki. Frank was from a farming family, and he was so good to us. I could remember as a child when he was courting my sister, he would take all of us to his house in Palo Alto. And we would really enjoy the rural life. And we'd stay overnight and my mother would be a little bit jealous because we'd come back and say, "We had the best food!" I'd never eaten string beans that was so fresh, because my mother always bought the stuff from a peddler, and those beans were probably couple of days old.

IRITANI: There were farms in Palo Alto?

C. IIYAMA: In Palo Alto. They didn't own their farms. They were shareholders, I would say. And they lived very poorly. They didn't even have a bathroom, only an outhouse. They even had Sears, Roebuck booklets for us to use for toilet paper.

IRITANI: And so she married and she went to a farming family.

C. IIYAMA: Yes, but he left the family and came out to San Francisco and lived at our hotel for room and board. My sister and Frank both fell in love and got married. He was really like a member of our family. He was like a big brother, and we all just really loved him. My third sister, Masako--she's much closer to us in age, and she was also very pretty. One of the things

that was hard when we were growing up was that people compared us all the time--five girls, and they would say my sister Tish was beautiful; my sister Kiyo was charming; my third sister, Massie was so pretty; and then Suddie--you know, I felt so sorry because the two of us were at the very end. They couldn't figure us out, but they said, "But at least she's really smart."

[LAUGHTER] But, you know, it was just one of those things. But sometimes the Japanese put such an emphasis on things like looks without seeing the other qualities which stand in good stead for you later on.

[LAUGHTER] So then my sister Massi was very popular, and yet it was hard for her because she was the middle child. She sometimes felt like she was left out, because I would be close to my sister Suddie, and my other two sisters would be close to each other. But Massie was also very kind to me. We were poor. I had very little wardrobe. I was going to college. I didn't have special party dresses so I always borrowed from her. She was good to lend her dresses--much of it she made herself.

IRITANI: She didn't go to college either?

C. IYAMA: No, she didn't go to college. So my sister Kiyo and I went to U. C.

Berkeley. My sister Suddie went to Junior College, and my brother Tamio went to U. C. Berkeley and Brigham Young University, and Harry graduated from U. C. Berkeley.

IRITANI: So where did she . . .

C. IYAMA: She went immediately after high school to work on Grant Avenue. She had secretarial skills. She took--in fact, when she was in high school, she centered on secretarial skills, because that was where there were possibilities of jobs. She was a very good typist and stenographer and worked on Grant Avenue in an office. She had a kind of a circumscribed life, but she had boy friends. I'm sure her life was pretty happy when she was a teenager growing up. And then my sister Sadako went to community college after high school. She also had secretarial skills. I think the aim for the Nisei women who had secretarial skills was to get into civil service, because there you get better wages, and the only alternative was to work for a Japanese company and . . .

IRITANI: And she was able to get civil service?

C. IYAMA: No, because the war and the evacuation came. My sister Masako worked later at the University of California in Berkeley as a secretary to those high in Administration. She suffered from arthritis at an early age, but she coped so well with her disability. We see her today as a model of courage and determination.

My sister Sadako went to Japan after the camps to work as a secretary in the U. S. Army of occupation. It is there she met her husband, Tom Kawaguchi. She later worked in the public schools.

IRITANI: [INAUDIBLE]

C. IYAMA: Yes. I went on to college and I was at the University of California and had a wonderful time. It was probably one of the best experiences in my life to go to college, because it opened . . .

IRITANI: Did you . . .

C. IYAMA: I was 16.

IRITANI: Oh, you started at . . .

C. IYAMA: Yes, I started at 16.

IRITANI: And you lived in the . . .

C. IYAMA: We were poor so I lived as a school girl for two years. Then I got a job working for some federal project at minimum wage. I was working in the Art Department where we would print all kinds of things for the Art Department. So then when I had a job, I commuted from San Francisco. And commute was fun, because we had at that time the ferries.

IRITANI: At that time it was the ferryboat.

C. IYAMA: Yes. We'd take the ferry boat and then the Key district train and go on to the campus. College was very social. In fact, the first couple of years, I really don't know how much I learned, because I was so busy running around. But I got a little more serious as I got older, and what helped was the fact that I love to read. And so sometimes when my friends would be looking for me, I'd be at Morrison Library. It was a place with lots of books and you can just sit and read forever. Every time they would look for me, they would

come to Morrison's. And so I read many novels; I read plays; I read essays--you know, just a lot of things which I think was my true education at Cal.

IRITANI: You ought to go on to your brothers.

C. IIYAMA: OK. My brothers. My brother Tamio was, again-- he was so cute. We would look at those pictures when he was young. He was just a doll. My two brothers had curly hair.

IRITANI: Really?

C. IIYAMA: My sister Suddie did too. Cute curls, you know, like ringlets. The two boys were really delightful. But we used to be envious because they had a lot more freedom than Suddie and I did. We had boy friends who were in a San Francisco Nisei basketball league, which was a big thing in San Francisco. My mother and father would restrict us to only one activity over the weekend. If you went to a basketball game on Sunday afternoon you couldn't go out at night. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights we had to stay home unless we were dating, compared to my brothers who had no such restrictions. We used to say, "Gee, they're so unfair." But there was a difference in the way they brought up girls and boys, and they were very protective. You know, when you got older you understood why, but at that time, when you were a kid, and especially when you were a teenager it was difficult. . Oh, one of the highlights of my life when I was a kid was that I worked at the fair--the Golden Gate Exposition.

IRITANI: Oh, Treasure Island!

C. IYAMA: Oh, to me, that was like Fairyland.

IRITANI: What was your job?

C. IYAMA: I worked at two different jobs. One as a docent at a Japanese art exhibit. I learned all about how vases and other art objects were made.

IRITANI: What was made?

C. IYAMA: For example, how they made vases--the shaping, kilns, paints, baking, etc.

This was at the Japanese pavilion. That was the second year. The first year I worked in the --like a sandwich shop. They had something called templa sandwich--t-e-m-p-l-a sandwich. It was tempura between two pieces of bread. [LAUGHTER] And that was the first time I had green tea ice cream, and I just love it. It was fun because there were big bands, and our friends would come and pick us up at night after we were through, and we would go to the big bands; we'd dance.

IRITANI: That was 1939?

C. IYAMA: '39, '40, yes. 1939 and '40--I worked both years. And this was summer time work, and I really enjoyed it. I did work in the summer and winter vacations before that at the stores. I used to do things like wrapping packages. If you saw the way I wrap packages, you'd wonder how I ever got that job. [LAUGHTER] I was wrapping packages, worked in the background, got minimum wage, but it was helpful. We always gave our

money to my mother. And then she would dole it out. And that's why we never had much clothing, because we needed it for everyday living. I think my teenage years were fun.

IRITANI: Let's go on to Tamio.

C. IYAMA: Tamio.

IRITANI: What did he do?

C. IYAMA: Tamio went to Galileo. We had Japanese school next door, and so we never had problems with having friends--always people around--never really had to go out of your way to make friends. We were very fortunate. Tamio was a little bit awkward. He was not a natural ball player or anything like that. And it is awfully hard for a boy to not excel in sports but he always had friends to play with. He joined the Boy Scouts. He was in the Boy Scouts Troop 12, and my sister Suddie's husband, Tom Kawaguchi, tells us that he could remember in the parades that my brother would be tooting his horn behind him. He told Tamio to make believe he was playing the horn because he was hitting the wrong notes. His friendships were basically with the Japanese community.

IRITANI: Tamio, getting back to him, what did he do after high school?

C. IYAMA: OK, after high school, he went on to college--in fact, Berkeley in 1941.

This was his first year and then Pearl Harbor. So he ended up in Brigham Young during the war years. He left camp at the end of 1942 to go to

school. He then came back to Cal when it was possible to return to California. He took his BA [Bachelor of Arts] at Cal--UC Berkeley, and he became an accountant. He then eventually went on for a CPA [Certified Public Accountant]. His life has been in the business world; he's a CPA, and he's retired now. He married Mickey from San Francisco.

IRITANI: And then Harry?

C. IIYAMA: And then my brother Harry--he went to . . .

IRITANI: Haruo.

C. IIYAMA: Yeah, Haruo. And he was so cute. As a child he would sing "*Haru ga kita, haru ga kita*." He'd come bouncing up. [LAUGHTER] He was a cute little kid, and lots of personality--really winning ways. In a way it was difficult for my brother Tamio who is altogether much quieter, and didn't have that kind of extrovert personality. Harry was also very independent. I could remember once when my mother was really upset at him and my father said, "Get out of the house!" So, he said, "OK" and started to walk out. He was just a little kid, and my mother and father got so worried, they went running after him. But he was always independent and bright and thinking for himself and made lots of friends. Always. Never had any problems with friends--very popular. And we all loved him. And he's the baby, you know, and . . .

IRITANI: Had he started at Berkeley?

C. IYAMA: No, my brother didn't at all. He went to high school in camp.

IRITANI: He was still in . . .

C. IYAMA: In high school in camp.

IRITANI: He was born in 1926. He was probably like a junior or senior in camp.

C. IYAMA: That's right, yes. Harry ended up with a Ph. D. from U.C. Berkeley in Social Welfare. Very successful career at U. C. L. A., professor, head of department, first to occupy an Emeritus Chair. He wrote many books, and is considered one of the top researchers and writer--Asian American Studies.

IRITANI: OK, that is your siblings, and to go on with your own life from there, you all went into Tanforan¹⁰.

C. IYAMA: No.

IRITANI: Oh, you went to Santa Anita.¹¹

C. IYAMA: I went to Santa Anita.

IRITANI: Why?

C. IYAMA: I assume it was because the government wanted to get us out as fast as they could and Tanforan was not ready to receive people. San Franciscans in Japantown went a month later. Our group in Chinatown went to Santa Anita

¹⁰ Tanforan: Assembly Center in California--one of 15 temporary detention camps in operation from late March 1942 to about middle of October 1942 where internee families were kept until relocated to more permanent detention camps called Relocation Centers. (*Ten Visits* by Frank and Joanne Iritani)

¹¹ Santa Anita: Assembly Center in California (see above).

which was ready for occupancy. And so we went there right away. And we were assigned to a horse stall.

IRITANI: When? What day?

C. IIYAMA: That was April 7 when we went . . .

IRITANI: Oh, that's right.

C. IIYAMA: Yes, April 7, 1942. We were so bewildered. We didn't know what was going to happen to us.

IRITANI: Let's go back to December 7.

C. IIYAMA: OK, OK.

IRITANI: Where were you?

C. IIYAMA: I was at Cal. I was at church with my sister Suddie. We went to the United Christ Church in San Francisco.

IRITANI: Presbyterian.

C. IIYAMA: Presbyterian. We used to go to Pine Church in San Francisco, but we made friends with people from the other church, so we switched over.

IRITANI: Very common.

C. IIYAMA: There we met a whole bunch of really good people--Dave Tatsuno. Do you know Dave Tatsuno? And Koji Murata and Tad Fujita. They were our teachers. When I was at Pine Church, Toshi Koba was my teacher. I don't know if you've ever heard of her. She was an exceptional woman. She should have been a dancer. She wanted to be a ballet dancer but there was

no opportunity for her. She was so outgoing--she was our Sunday school teacher. We all loved her. But back to Pearl Harbor. We just got out of church, we were with our friends when we heard newsboys saying, "Extra, extra, Japs attack Pearl Harbor!" And we said, "What?" At college, we had a speaker about September 1941 at the Japanese Students Club who stated that he thinks there is going to be a war between Japan and the United States. We all ha-ha'd him. We said, "How could there be a war between Japan and the United States?" We were so naive, and didn't know enough.

IRITANI: In spite of what you were reading in the papers at that time.

C. IYAMA: That's right, that's right. We said, "Oh, it couldn't be. How could there be war?" And if Japan didn't attack Pearl Harbor, I don't know if there would have been a war, because there was a strong segment of the American public against going to war

IRITANI: Was there immediate reaction as you were walking?

C. IYAMA: No, not at all.

IRITANI: No reaction.

C. IYAMA: And then we came home and we told Papa. And he said, "No, that's not true." He said Japan did not attack. He said it must be the British. He was so anti-England, and he figured that it was British propaganda. But we said, "But, Papa, it says in the paper." He said, "No, it couldn't be." Then I went in the afternoon to the library at U. C. Berkeley because we were studying

for our finals, December 7--that was finals week. And it was really the first time I got a feeling for the gravity of the situation because some of the girls were crying. You know, we met at the library--RBR which was the place where all the Japanese students went . . .

IRITANI: RBR?

C. IYAMA: I forget why it's called RBR, but we always used to go there . . .

IRITANI: RBR.

C. IYAMA: Some of the girls were crying, and we asked, "Why, why?" "Because we were at war. We don't know what's going to happen." And that was the first time it really hit us. That we might be somehow involved in this whole thing.

IRITANI: As Niseis.¹²

C. IYAMA: As Niseis. But we tried to go on for there was nothing we could do. And then during that week after Pearl Harbor, we --I was commuting at that time--commute--you were not supposed to go for more than five miles away.

IRITANI: That's right.

C. IYAMA: That's right. I did go to school . . .

IRITANI: Five-mile limit curfew.

¹² Niseis: Second generation; a native U. S. or Canadian citizen born of immigrant Japanese parents and educated in America.

C. IYAMA: That's right--curfew. And I could remember blackouts. Once in a blackout

I was sitting in one of the trains in Berkeley--just sitting there for about an hour or two hours until the all clear sign came through and all. There was real fear. Not even so much as a Japanese American but as an American--fear of what's going to happen. Are the Japanese troops going to come here? At this time there were blackouts when we had to put black curtains on our windows. My sister Masako who had gone to Chinatown to buy those marvelous Chinese pastries would share them during the blackouts. We'd sit in there and eat. My brother Harry loved Tommy Dorsey and would play the trombone. He tried to imitate Tommy Dorsey and play the *Song of India*. We would put on records and eat these delicious pastries and sit and just talk. We shared our fears because we didn't know what was going to happen.

IRITANI: Most of [the people] didn't think in those terms.

C. IYAMA: About doing that, yeah. I do remember vaguely that we were called at Cal to a meeting at that time.

IRITANI: By whom?

C. IYAMA: By the Provost--Vice Provost of the University of California, and . . .

IRITANI: You don't remember his name?

C. IYAMA: He was very liberal. His name was Monroe Deutsch.

IRITANI: The only name I know is Sproul.

C. IYAMA: It wasn't Sproul. He was Vice Provost. And he called the Japanese students together and he tried to keep the Japanese students on the campus to take these exams and to return the following semester.

IRITANI: There was no . . .

C. IYAMA: After Pearl Harbor, a lot of students went home.

IRITANI: Right away.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, they went home right away because they were worried about their parents living in the farm area--in the rural areas. There were attacks against Japanese, and I heard one of them went back, because I think her parents were murdered in one of those rural areas in California. Those of us with boy friends began to wonder--should we get married--shouldn't we get married, but I wasn't ready for marriage at that time. I do know people got married, because they didn't want to be separated. But it was a difficult time. So then the Provost called us together and urged us to stay--stay in school as long as you can. "Your education is going to be important to you." Because many of us lived in the Bay Area we expected to stay in school. We hit the five-mile limit but that was all right-- nobody was going to stop us from going to the University. So I stayed at the University and went the next semester too. I was a senior and I would have gotten my degree in June of 1942. And I remember his saying, "And you know that you are citizens and you have your rights." Do you remember right after

Pearl Harbor there was not that big call for putting us away. It took about a month. In January, I think, it started. You know, all these negative things--all these reports about the Japanese in Hawaii--how terrible they were, that they cut these arrows in the sugar cane fields so that the Japanese planes could find the airfields, that Japanese parked their cars at important highways to stop traffic, etc. These incidents were reported in January and heated the atmosphere and people's fears, plus these false reports of all kinds of sightings of Japanese subs and planes. All that was headlined in the newspapers. On February 19, 1942, when [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, we thought, "Now, what's going to happen?" Because at the beginning right after Pearl Harbor my parents had to sign up. Then my father was taken sometime either end of December or beginning in January--he wasn't picked up in the first group. He was picked up in the second sweep.

IRITANI: You weren't there at the time?

C. IYAMA: No, I wasn't there because I was at school. My father was taken and my sisters--two sisters were Sadako and Masako--because my sister Kiyo had been married and lived in Berkeley.

IRITANI: Right.

C. IYAMA: With her husband. So my two . . .

IRITANI: Just above you.

C. IYAMA: Yes. So Suddie and Massie had to really take the responsibility for the house. My father was taken away, and they called to find out where he was taken. But they couldn't find him.. So for about a week they didn't know where he was. He was confined in a jail in San Francisco before they shipped him out to North Dakota.

IRITANI: Bismark?¹³

C. IYAMA: Yes. But--and my father never talked about what it was like in Bismarck. We'd ask him, and, you know, he just didn't talk about it. He did say some things--the fact that he was the Ping Pong champion in Bismarck. So I guess he had some recreation. My father loves to talk to people. I don't know whether they had a radio that was contraband or not, but he would get reports about what was happening in the war. And Japan--of course, these were reports that Japan was always winning the war, and so my father would go from one barrack to the other with the news of the tremendous Japanese victories. My father was pro-Japan. And, again, you don't blame him, because he could never become a citizen and there were so many laws against the Japanese. And he had to work so hard. I think most people that come from a country have these vivid feelings about their country of origin.

IRITANI: So how long was he in Bismarck?

¹³ Bismarck, North Dakota: Justice Department Internment Camp which included Kibei, Buddhist ministers, newspaper people and other community leaders. (*Ten Visits* by Frank and Joanne Iritani)

C. IYAMA: He was in Bismarck for about six months until we went to camp--when we went to permanent camp to Topaz. He came and joined us there. He had a separate hearing

IRITANI: He had a hearing where?

C. IYAMA: At Bismarck--at Bismarck. They deemed that he was not a threat to the U.S. and so he came and joined us at Topaz.

[END TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

IRITANI: In Santa Anita of April of 1942 what preparation did your family have to make before you left?

C. IYAMA: My father was a person who takes risks--business risks. He had bought an apartment in Japantown in addition to the hotel just before WW II.

IRITANI: That you were living in?

C. IYAMA: No, we still lived in the hotel. So we had to get rid of the apartment that he had in Japantown, as well as make arrangements about the hotel because we rented it on a lease. The apartment he bought in the name of the children, so that we were able to buy it. But the leasing of the hotel was in his name. My sister Masako really took over. She was the only one who had any kind of business sense at all, and she was able to get one of the people--a tenant of our hotel who is black, Mr. Pierson, to take care of the

hotel. We never made any money on it, but Mr. Pierson was able to pay off our lease. So at least the hotel would be there when we came home.

IRITANI: The apartment house?

C. IYAMA: The apartment house was taken over by the government--no, a bank--a bank.

And the bank was very honest, and so when we came back, my father had the apartment house too. The apartment house in San Francisco was experiencing some kind of boom at that time--the war--and people coming in to San Francisco, and so we did OK. We were very fortunate, because my father had the apartment house that he could go back to.

IRITANI: So you didn't have to sell anything then.

C. IYAMA: Well, we sold some of the stuff--our personal things, you know, and we left some personal possessions like the refrigerator and all the furniture. When we returned his lease had expired but he had the apartment house and so he could make a living. I think my father and mother--their happiest time in life was when they came back from camp. They had the apartment house. They bought a house in Berkeley for about \$6000, and it was a house with a small house in the back, so that when the members of our family returned to California we could always stay in the back until we found our own house. My mother never used to go to church, but she had some friends who went to the Berkeley United Church, and so my parents joined the church. It was a good time for them. They didn't have to worry about their children

anymore. They didn't have to worry about the depression anymore. They didn't have to deal with the grandchildren. We would all come and they would enjoy us and we would go home. [LAUGHTER] The role of the grandparents.

IRITANI: Let's go back to camp.

C. IYAMA: OK.

IRITANI: What was it like in . . .

C. IYAMA: Topaz?

IRITANI: In Santa Anita first?

C. IYAMA: Well, Santa Anita was rather an exciting time for us because, again, this is right after I got out of college and . . .

IRITANI: Did they mail your . . .

C. IYAMA: They mailed my . . .

IRITANI: Diploma?

C. IYAMA: . . . diploma when I was living in the horse stall. We were living in the horse stall in Santa Anita. I think the first day we got to Santa Anita, my mother cried because it looked so awful in the horse stall.

IRITANI: And it smelled so awful I'm sure.

C. IYAMA: Terrible! In June Los Angeles gets exceedingly hot, and we weren't used to it. My mother cried at the beginning, but she perked up after she got to see some of her friends around and, you know, there were other women around.

IRITANI: And the people in your area . . .

C. IYAMA: Were all together.

IRITANI: . . .were all together.

C. IYAMA: So we were able to support each other. For those of us who were single, it was not so bad. I always had this very optimistic feeling about the government that eventually things were going to turn out OK. I could remember my mother as we were packing to go to camp, would say something like "They're going to kill us." So we said, "No, Mama, they are not going to kill us." My mother was fearful because my father was gone. My mother had been protected by my father for such a long time. She never had to really deal with the outside world. She used to contribute to the family income by sewing. She would sew these lovely Japanese kimonos for the shops in San Francisco.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

C. IYAMA: A dollar--she only made a dollar!

IRITANI: A dollar for a kimono!

C. IYAMA: For a kimono that she sewed all by hand.

IRITANI: Wow!

C. IYAMA: But she would be sewing and we used to say, "What's wrong with Mama?" because as soon as we got near her sewing, she would start yelling. She didn't want us to get it dirty.

IRITANI: "Don't touch!"

C. IIYAMA: "Don't touch!" But we didn't realize that. We just thought, "Gee, she's just kind of crazy." [LAUGHTER] So she always tried to provide in some way to supplement the family income. She worked very hard. But she cried when we were in camp because she was so worried. When we were putting clothes in our suitcases, she said, "Put only your dirty clothes in there because they are going to send us out to be farm workers." My sister and I said, "We don't have anything but funny clothes anyway."

[LAUGHTER] But she was depressed, I think, because my father was away, and not knowing what was going to happen to us. We were full of energy, and I felt that eventually we were going to get out. We had two suitcases. My mother went to the Five-and-Dime [store] and bought cardboard suitcases for us which we were so proud of. We never had a suitcase in our life, and we packed in the things that WRA ordered like forks and spoons, dishes, etc., and clothing. And the other one--I did bring books, because I knew I was going to go on to school. I wanted to get a graduate degree, so I put books in my second suitcase, which I never really used because by the time I got to it, it was passe. But our family made that transition to the camp on a train. The train stopped overnight somewhere, and I could remember we had to pull the shades down because of the passing troop trains. I remember also that there were some soldiers on the

train and they were very friendly. Some of the girls--younger girls flirting with the soldiers--lots of repartee and laughter. My mother felt it was dreadful, but I thought, well, they're having fun. But when I got to camp, because there were so few of us who were university graduates--because the medium age was about 18 or 19.

IRITANI: 16.

C. IIYAMA: 16, OK, so when you think of that, I was much older. I was 20, and I was a graduate of a university, so I got a job at . . .

IRITANI: Was that right away you were able to get a job?

C. IIYAMA: As soon as I got there.

IRITANI: You registered.

C. IIYAMA: We registered and then they asked us what kind of jobs you want. I think when we went there, there were less than 10,000. It ended up with almost 18,000. So we were there fairly early, compared to others who came in later, so we had the "pick of the jobs." So I was interviewed by somebody--a hakujin. And they said, "Oh, we'll put you in charge of recreation." So, you know, I was in charge of recreation for 18,000 people. And when you are 20 years old, what do you know about organizing, or living in a concentration camp? I said, "My God!" But I was so lucky, because two of us were in charge of recreation, Moto Asakawa and I.

IRITANI: Moto?

C. IIYAMA: Moto Asakawa was my sister Kiyo's friend. He graduated with my sister Kiyo. And he was, I think, in business. He had a farm--I don't remember--but he was much more stable than I. He must have been about six years older than me, but much more mature. And so between his maturity and my enthusiasm, we created, I thought, a really decent recreation department. And, you know, those of us in recreation had the most fun of everybody in the camp. Looking back on it, I can see that we tried to replicate the things that we knew--that we enjoyed when we were children. We had children's programs, all kinds of arts and crafts, classes, sports, bands, dances, etc. The Japanese are very creative, and we started the Education Department. I thought the teachers we had were so enthusiastic and hard working. They looked around to see what they could use for teaching material. It was very informal because it was summer time. We started in April. The parents wanted the kids to have school, because otherwise the kids were running around. Eventually they organized an Education Department headed by some professor. I forget--somebody with a Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] took over the education part of the camp. And they had--you couldn't believe it--they had school classes in the grandstand. Imagine a teacher trying to keep the kids to sit on those benches. I don't know how they did it. One of the sad things I remember vividly was that I used to go around checking to make sure things were going on, and there would be these kids

singing *God Bless America* every morning. And their voices are so pure and sweet when they sing. It just made you feel a little bit sad, because we thought it's our government who put us in here. We were so busy--so many things to do, and we had to get a staff together. My supervisor was Spike England and he was the head of Recreation. He was probably a football player. But he was just really a nice guy. And Lily Okura--you know, Pat Okura's wife?

IRITANI: Oh, yeah.

C. IYAMA: Lily Okura was his secretary. And Lily Okura was so beautiful, and she would dress up in camp. She was the only one I know who wore heels. The rest of us looked as sloppy as can be, but she always looked so elegant. She was a movie star. My sister Suddie used to have a lot of movie magazines, and we saw a picture of what they called, "Warner Brothers' Baby Stars." They were starlets being groomed by Warner Brothers. There was one Japanese girl and that was Lily. So when I met Lily, I said to her, "Lily, I saw a picture of you." She was so pleased because she thought nobody ever saw that. But she looked lovely everyday. She was very nice to us. Spike liked her very much. She was very efficient--a good secretary. Once Lily and I and Spike and somebody else--we were able to go out to Los Angeles. I've never been to Los Angeles in my life, and it was exciting. Spike tried to make life nicer for us. Whenever we made a request, he always followed

through. And so on July 4 we had a fair--"Anita Funita." We had all kinds of games for kids and an art exhibit and entertainment including a band. My brother brought his trombone and we had a band in Santa Anita.

IRITANI: Only what you could carry, and a trombone . . .[LAUGHTER]

C. IYAMA: A trombone. And he had a thing with my mother on that too, because my mother wanted him to put clothing and stuff. My mother didn't care too much about books because that was good, but trombone, you know.

[LAUGHTER] But anyway . . .

IRITANI: It was a play thing.

C. IYAMA: That's right, that's right, but we had a band.

IRITANI: That's good.

C. IYAMA: It was interesting--really interesting to me because the people there were so different from the people I knew. People I knew were San Francisco people, and generally college-age people--or people who were going to college or something, and so there is that, again, the class thing. Even though we were poor, we knew we were going to college. In camp we had what they called the "yogores."¹⁴ The yogores came from Los Angeles, from the areas where the zootsuiters¹⁵--they came wearing zootsuits. Did you ever know that?

IRITANI: Yeah.

¹⁴ Yogores: Grubby unkempt people.

C. IYAMA: Do you remember that?

IRITANI: Poston had some too.

C. IYAMA: They called themselves the "Exclusive 20s." They were like gang members wearing "zoot suits." At the camp dances they were quick to fight. The fights were just fist fights, you know. It was quelled easily as compared to today when they shoot each other. So everyone was careful not to cut in on their girl friends. Their girl friends wore miniskirts at a time when nobody else had miniskirts--really short skirts.

IRITANI: Right.

C. IYAMA: They were a separate group among themselves. They wore it like a badge.

And I was really surprised when one of the guys who I thought was a yogore, and he used to wear a, you know, these wooden clogs instead of shoes.

IRITANI: Geta.¹⁶

C. IYAMA: Geta. He would wear geta--ka-ran, ka-ran, ka-ran, marching in. And he would go to the piano. Somebody had donated a piano for our recreation hall, and he would go there and sit down and played Rachmanioff. And we thought, Rachmanioff!

IRITANI: Wow!

¹⁵ Zootsuiters: persons wearing zootsuits, an exaggerated style, high-waisted baggy trousers narrowing at the cuffs and a long, draped coat.

¹⁶ Geta: Wooden clogs (shoes).

C. IYAMA: We had stereotyped these people as "yogores" with no understanding of music or anything else. It was really for me an eye-opener to get me out of the kind of middle class way of looking at things and to see people in a different way. But he was amazing. I often wondered--I never knew his name, and I often wondered what ever happened to him, because he would come in almost every morning and he would just play. And when he played he would have this look on his face that he was transported. It was just a wonderful thing for him. And to see that--to see this guy--this guy that you would never dream of dating, because he was a yogore. You know, he looks like a . . .

IRITANI: Because of his clothing.

C. IYAMA: That's right. His clothing and his hair--I think he had the duck tail.

IRITANI: The duck tail.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, but anyway, it was interesting.

IRITANI: So what did your mother do in camp?

C. IYAMA: My mother didn't do anything in Santa Anita. She was in line all the time.

When she went to Topaz, she began to work. When she was in Santa Anita, she didn't work.

IRITANI: And so when did you go to Topaz?

C. IYAMA: In about five months. We had gone in April and five months later we were in Topaz. The first month at Santa Anita was really dreadful because the

Army was not ready for us. Whenever I talk to the kids, I say, "Did you ever eat green bologna?" You know, that's what we had--green bologna. And I do remember all of us getting diarrhea and those lousy toilets. It was hard. You could laugh at it now, but it was just excruciating when you have to go to the bathroom and it's all taken and you don't know what to do. But despite the physical hardship and despite the fact that we were in a jail--we did have barbed-wire fence around us and all, we still had that feeling of excitement because it was new and we were meeting new people. And then we had these dances. We had almost, I think, dances almost every other night. We just kept on because the kids were coming in.

IRITANI: And new ones too coming in all the time.

C. IIYAMA: New ones coming in. I really wish I had kept a diary, because it was so fascinating. I do remember one time we had a riot, and I was reading about the riot that the government described. Did you ever get that big publication that came out recently about all the camps?

IRITANI: Not yet.

C. IIYAMA: Anyway, I was looking at that the other day and they pointed out that it was because of the milk situation for the mothers and not enough food for the children. It certainly had something to do with the food--lack of food. And then the charges that the white people in the mess halls were carrying home food for their families, and then resentment against people supposedly

giving the government names of Japanese who might be suspect. A mixture of charges, but above all the anger of being put into the camp just exploded. I remember the riot differently in Santa Anita. We were looking out of our office. We saw the soldiers coming in--American soldiers walking very carefully with their guns. We began to laugh because right behind them the evacuee children are walking just like the soldiers right behind them. And somehow the gravity of it just really went down and it was settled without any bloodshed or without any confrontation. There was just no confrontation.

IRITANI: Actually, it was not a riot then.

C. IYAMA: No, it was not a riot. It was really incipient. It could have . . .

IRITANI: It could have happened.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, but it was really taken care of. But they called it a riot. There was a search for contraband in the barracks, and that was the immediate spark for confrontation. But, anyway, that was it. But that was the only riot that I knew of in Santa Anita. But Santa Anita was of short duration. We were young and we were used to primitive conditions when we went camping at Russian River at Mr. Shinya's place.

IRITANI: So what camp was it?

C. IYAMA: Shinya--S-H-I-N-Y-A on Russian River. And we used to go there in the summer time. Shinyasan's camp. It was near Sebastopol where they grew

apples. But Santa Anita was lousy and it was difficult for many people, but for people like us, the physical conditions were not as devastating as it was to older people and mothers. But in terms of deprivation of civil liberties, it was traumatic.

IRITANI: Younger people--teenagers.

C. IYAMA: Yes. We went to Topaz, and that's where I met Ernie. We met because we were both in Human Services. He was in Housing and I was in Social Welfare. They put me to work in Social Welfare because families were having trouble.

IRITANI: Right away you were assigned that?

C. IYAMA: Yes, and I was the head of a block of social workers. And I didn't know anything about social work. What do I know?

IRITANI: That was not your major.

C. IYAMA: That was not. Well, psychology was my major so that's why they put me into it. If you were an Issei--would [you] listen to a young girl who just came out of college, who was in charge of recreation? There was a lack of people in that field. There really was because nobody went on to social work; everybody was too young yet to go on in college. [INAUDIBLE] Life was much, much different when I went to Topaz. You got a sense of permanence. Santa Anita, we knew it was temporary. Santa Anita had greenery and all those orange blossoms around that you could see and smell

there--very pretty. Then you go out to this wasted desert, you see nothing but dust and some sage brush. I think the most beautiful thing in Topaz was the sky at night. The rest of it was really very grim, with dust storms, blocks of tar-covered barracks, and muddy roads.

IRITANI: Dust storms, I think, in Topaz was very bad.

C. IYAMA: It was alkalized soil--it's really fine soil, so that it would just whip through and come through . . .

IRITANI: It kind of stings.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, it stings. And then it came through the barracks because the wood was green with all kinds of knotholes. It would just come through, even if you cleaned. So my mother was busy cleaning the house all the time. You know, the ugly little place that we had, because none of us . . .

IRITANI: How large was your room?

C. IYAMA: You know, I would say it was about as big as . . .

IRITANI: In Poston, I know our room was like 20' by 25'.

C. IYAMA: Yeah. I don't know how big it was. I'll have to look it up and see.

IRITANI: In your barrack, were there four rooms?

C. IYAMA: Yeah. Four rooms and we got to know people around us. We made some good friends that we see occasionally even today. When we went in to Topaz, it was still not ready, and it rained that night. We didn't have a roof.

IRITANI: In Topaz?

C. IYAMA: In Topaz when we went in.

IRITANI: You didn't have a roof?

C. IYAMA: We didn't have a roof--the roof came in after we came in.

IRITANI: But it was not raining when you went in?

C. IYAMA: No. But it rained--it did rain.

IRITANI: At night.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, at night. So the people from Santa Anita were wet and unhappy. It was strange, but the San Franciscans who went to Tanforan felt those of us from Santa Anita became more like people from Los Angeles. They were friends of ours, they were relatives, they were people that we had grown up with, but there was always this line, "Are you guys from Santa Anita?" It took a little while to get over that.

IRITANI: And you were from San Francisco.

C. IYAMA: From San Francisco and they were friends of ours that we knew from before. We went to school with them and everything. But just that little distinction. You could see how prejudices develop because of differences. Just a little difference of six months. But anyway people got over it. Because I was in the Social Services, I did see the devastation that the camps did to families and how hard it was for some families. And I used to see teenage kids and their mothers and fathers having a hard time living in

one room, constantly in each other's hair, and no place to go for privacy.

And teenagers were in the age of rebellion.

IRITANI: Doing what they want to do.

C. IYAMA: Doing what they want to do but they could not. I remember that gossip was very strong in camp. I was in Santa Anita, and I was holding hands with this young man that I was going around with. My mother--she heard about it and she got so mad at me. We had to be so good, because of the gossip. And the Isseis really kept tabs on what was happening to their children. [Chuckles] So we were very careful.

IRITANI: In your work, what kind of work did you actually have to do?

C. IYAMA: Well, basically, I supervised block workers who worked on family and community problems. But I also worked with families. A lot of them were minor problems, e.g., that a neighbor was making too much noise or someone was taking food home from the kitchen and cooking in their rooms. But there were family squabbles too. Generally, the teenage kids were considered unruly and the parents didn't know what to do because the kids were out of hand. There's a wonderful story that Kiku tells about . . .

IRITANI: Kiku?

C. IYAMA: Kiku Funabiki and she talks about the camp dances. By that time I had met Ernie and we were going around and got much more serious.

IRITANI: Until all those other boy friends were gone--disappeared.

C. IYAMA: That's right. We went around in Topaz. And that was--because he was so serious. Ernie was so serious. And he was with the Nisei Demos.

IRITANI: The Nisei?

C. IYAMA: Democrats. He began to talk about the politics and gave me books to read. Some of them were Marxist and some were written by people like Carey McWilliams. It's the first time I found out that black people had to pay a poll tax. I didn't know that, even though I had taken all these classes at Cal, nobody ever mentioned them. And nobody ever mentioned treatment of minorities when I was taking economics or history. There were these wonderful women in the group and Kazu Ikeda is one of them.

IRITANI: What's the first name?

C. IYAMA: Kazu.

IRITANI: K-A-S-U?

C. IYAMA: K-A-Z-U. Ikeda. I-K-E-D-A. I just admired her because she knew so much about the world that I didn't know.

[END TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B]

IRITANI: We are on Tape 2, Side B, and I am going to interview Ernie Iiyama-- Ernest Iiyama, and have him tell us his story and then later on we'll have Ernie and Chiz at the time that they were married where we left Chiz.

So Ernie, would you like to begin with your parents' background and anything you recall that they had told you.

E. IYAMA: Well, it's a little hard because I was separated from my parents for a long period when I came back from Japan.

IRITANI: Oh!

E. IYAMA: The whole family went back to Japan . . .

IRITANI: Tell us right from the beginning then from whatever you remember from your childhood and when you were born, first of all.

E. IYAMA: Well, I didn't get a chance to learn too much about my parents because of my situation when we went back to Japan.

IRITANI: In what year?

E. IYAMA: I went back in 1920 or '21--I forgot which one.

IRITANI: What year were you born?

E. IYAMA: I was born in 1912, so it must have been around 1921 that I went back.

IRITANI: You were only . . .

E. IYAMA: Nine years old.

IRITANI: . . .nine years old at the time. And your whole family--where did they live before that? Where were you born?

E. IYAMA: We lived in Oakland. I think my father came here before the earthquake, because I'm figuring it out from our birth dates. I was born in 1912, my brother was born in 1910, and there was another brother,

and I assume he was born on 1908, so I'm figuring that my father wouldn't call my mother over right after the earthquake, because it would be too hard for her.

IRITANI: Right.

E. IYAMA: So I figure he must have come before 1906 and then . . .

IRITANI: Perhaps even before 1900.

E. IYAMA: It's possible. But my father was a teacher in Japan, so when he came over, he didn't go farming. He went into peddling groceries right away.

IRITANI: In Oakland?

IRITANI: In Oakland, and then he opened a store after that. And then he called my mother. My mother tended the store while he peddled fruits and vegetables.

IRITANI: So it was grocery store?

E. IYAMA: A grocery--mostly food.

IRITANI: Vegetables.

E. IYAMA: Yeah. My mother was also an educated woman for those times and came from an old and well-to-do family. For this reason I feel that it must have been difficult for her to work as she did.

And then my mother was saying she had a hard time because she didn't know the language when she first came over and was taking care of the store, so it was difficult for her she said. And then she said some

black kids came around and one time when she was tending the store threw a brick through the window, so it must have been really terrifying for her. This store was on Webster between 6th and 7th Streets in Oakland.

IRITANI: Right.

E. IYAMA: But, anyway, they managed to build up their trade and then they moved up to a place on Telegraph and 21st, and that was right across the street from the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association]. The building is still there. YMCA recently moved over to Broadway, but until maybe two or three years ago, they were still there. I was born there.

IRITANI: At the house.

E. IYAMA: At this place on Telegraph.

IRITANI: In the house.

E. IYAMA: Well, we lived in back of the store actually.

IRITANI: I see.

E. IYAMA: It was built in a funny way. The store was facing Telegraph where you entered it, and then in the back there was a long . . .

IRITANI: Hallway?

E. IYAMA: No.

IRITANI: Corridor?

E. IIYAMA: Like a house, but it was a long room. She had a kitchen and dining area back there, and then a bedroom with two beds were in the back. We slept separately--the kids slept separately from the parents. And in the back we had a garage. The garage entrance was from the side street, so that when you came in, the entrance was through the back of the kitchen, and then there was an open space that came up to the back of the store. One time, my father heard some noises that sounded like somebody was trying to open the window with a screwdriver or something, so he put on the light and he went out. [LAUGHTER] He would never do this today. He went out but said there was nobody there. He said there was a mark of a screwdriver on the window pane. Anyway, he built up this trade there. One thing I remember happening was that there was a barber shop next door and there was a post between their opening and our opening in the door. Their door closed from the inside, and ours closed inside on this side, and I was holding that post and swinging back and forth.

IRITANI: Oh!

E. IIYAMA: Somebody went into the barber shop and slammed the door shut.

[LAUGHTER] And I got my fingers caught in there.

IRITANI: Oh, You were pretty young. You were very young.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, I was a little kid then. But no bones were broken. I guess I didn't start school there. I think we moved up to this place on 37th and Telegraph to a new store. Naturally, I wasn't in an area where any Japanese lived. So I didn't have any Japanese kids to play with. I played with Caucasian kids all the time. After we moved up to 37th Street I went to Durant Elementary School which was down on 28th and--I think it was West Street. It's near Market Street, and we walked all the way down there. When you think of it--from 37th down to 28th.

IRITANI: Children can do it.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. We walked down there every day, rain or shine.

IRITANI: So during all this time while you were going to the grammar school--now we call it elementary school. But at that time you didn't have any Japanese American friends?

E. IIYAMA: Well, we had some contacts because my parents went to the Buddhist Church, so on Sundays, we would go down there.

IRITANI: Right.

E. IIYAMA: And then later on after I started to go to grammar school, I went to the Japanese School there.

IRITANI: At the Buddhist Church.

E. IIYAMA: Buddhist Church.

IRITANI: Was that everyday after school or just weekends--Saturdays?

- E. IYAMA: No, I think it was couple of days anyway, because the teacher came around with a car and took us.
- IRITANI: Oh, you got transportation, OK.
- E. IYAMA: Yeah, she came around and picked us up and took us to the school. Then we learned Japanese and then they would bring us back home.
- IRITANI: Oh, very good. So at that point, you learned quite a bit of Japanese if you went that often.
- E. IYAMA: [LAUGHTER] Not very much.
- IRITANI: Not much, huh? [LAUGHTER]
- E. IYAMA: Because, you know, we went out and we had more fun out there than . . .
- IRITANI: More play time than learning time.
- E. IYAMA: Yeah, so I didn't learn much--when I went back to Japan later, I had to learn from the beginning.
- IRITANI: But you went to Japan in 1920?
- E. IYAMA: '20 or '21--I can't remember. I know it was before the earthquake. You know, the big earthquake was what--1923 in Japan--in Tokyo?
- IRITANI: Oh, the Tokyo . . .
- E. IYAMA: At least a year, so before . . .
- IRITANI: So you were there at that time.
- E. IYAMA: Yeah.

IRITANI: OK. So when you went back, your parents went back in order to live in Japan?

E. IIYAMA: Well, my father was the oldest son and they were an old family there. My grandfather was the village head. And evidently even his father was a village head. So it's an old, old household and they were well known in the community.

IRITANI: Where in Japan?

E. IIYAMA: In Hiroshima. It's outside of the City of Hiroshima.

IRITANI: So you went there with the idea that your family would stay there then.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, because that was my father's intention.

IRITANI: Did he--he just leased this land and all these properties here.

E. IIYAMA: Here in the U. S., yeah, because they couldn't buy it.

IRITANI: They couldn't purchase and, of course, you . . .

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, so we all had to lease it.

IRITANI: And he didn't attempt to purchase in the name of his children.

E. IIYAMA: No.

IRITANI: Some people did and declared themselves guardians. But he didn't do that.

E. IIYAMA: No, he didn't do that.

IRITANI: OK. So now you are in Japan and you are nine-years old. Did you feel your Japanese was adequate?

E. IIYAMA: No, we didn't know much--neither my brother nor I knew enough Japanese because--as far as writing goes, we knew nothing, you know--just a few words of Japanese.

IRITANI: Can you remember how difficult it was starting the Japanese language school?

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, it was kind of hard because we had to start from the first grade.

IRITANI: Right, and you were bigger than the other kids.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, but the teachers stayed after school and taught us. I guess my father must have paid them extra to do that, but because of that, after we finished the reader for each grade, we moved up to the next grade. I graduated grammar school, but I was still one year behind because we didn't move up fast enough. When we got out of grammar school, we were supposed to go into high school. In Japan it's six years grammar school, and then you go into five years of high school or chugakko¹⁷.

IRITANI: At that time.

E. IIYAMA: At that time, yeah. But we didn't know enough Japanese at the time, so my father didn't figure we could pass the exam even to go to chugakko, because, you know, you have to take an examination to get into higher schools in Japan. My father said, "Well, maybe you should go to "koto sho gakko." I don't know what you call it here--junior high or middle school, I guess, is what it is. And there are two years of that. And he

said maybe you can go there for another two years and then see if you can take the exam and go into chugakko, but he didn't tell us that he was also trying to get us into chugakko some other way. Evidently, he went over and talked to the principal of a private chugakko and he got them to put us into a night school, so we went to night school for about, I don't know, for about three months or so, and then they said they could transfer us into the regular chugakko, and that's how we got into chugakko and then went through. By the time of the third year of my high school, I knew more Japanese than the other students. I studied a lot harder, so things worked out all right in the later years, but it was kind of hard at the beginning. When I was going to grammar school in Japan, both my brother and I were good runners. In Japan, every fall, they have undokais¹⁸, you know. They compete against each school.

IRITANI: Yes. One is a track meet.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, they have these relays--relay teams in each school, and they compete against each other, so we go to the different schools and we compete whenever they have their undokais. So we participated in that, both my brother and I. We were in the same grade so we both . . .

IRITANI: Oh, you were--all the time that you were in . . .

¹⁷ Chugakko: High school

¹⁸ Undokais: Athletic Meets

E. IIYAMA: That was one thing that was kind of bad, because we were in the same grade all the time.

IRITANI: And at that time when your father went back, was it with the idea he would take over a family business or . . .

E. IIYAMA: Well, he--of course, he was going to inherit the . . .

IRITANI: The property.

E. IIYAMA: . . .the property. It wasn't a business they had. It was just a house and they owned land. That was all. And that was the reason my father came over because they didn't have any money. They had land but no money, and they didn't have money to pay the taxes. So taxes were higher at the time, they said. That's why they came over here.

IRITANI: So he earned enough here to take back and pay for what was needed by his family--his parents. And then he took over the property?

E. IIYAMA: Yeah.

IRITANI: He became . . .

E. IIYAMA: Well, they took over the property and my father being the chon¹⁹ had to build a house for each of his younger brothers. He had two younger brothers. He had to build a house for them too. You build them a house and then you give them a little patch of land, you know, and so . . .

IRITANI: Did he farm that land?

E. IIYAMA: Well, he was sort of a gentleman farmer.

IRITANI: Oh, my!

E. IIYAMA: We farmed two patches of rice fields but . . .

IRITANI: It wasn't extensive.

E. IIYAMA: No. We just went out--I even helped.

IRITANI: What kind of work did you do?

E. IIYAMA: Well, I just went out and, of course, we helped plant it, but that was back-breaking because you have to stoop.

IRITANI: Back breaking, yeah.

E. IIYAMA: So being a kid, I just did it for a little while and quit. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: Off you go.

E. IIYAMA: We just went out into the fields of rice for a little while, and then when the rice plants grew up a little, we had to go in between with these little cultivators to cut . . .

IRITANI: Cut the weeds.

E. IIYAMA: Weeds out so we would walk through with that back and forth. And, of course, I went into the mountains with my father to cut wood because we had the wood-burning stove, so we would go up to the mountains and cut these small trees down. Some of them were deadwood but some weren't. We'd cut these small trees and bring it back and then cut them into size and split them, so that they would burn easily. I did things like that. Of course, we had some hatake [fields] where we planted things

¹⁹ Chonan: Eldest son

like potatoes and cucumbers and different kinds of beans and things of that sort, so I had to cultivate those, and . . .

IRITANI: Have you any idea what your grandparents had been working at?

E. IYAMA: Well, they were the same as my father, I guess. They were just land owners.

IRITANI: Just land owners.

E. IYAMA: Yeah. They did some work but not too much. They leased out their land and then they got a portion of the crops for leasing the land to the farmers.

IRITANI: Right.

E. IYAMA: That's how they made their living, but I guess they weren't making too much money, because they . . .

IRITANI: They couldn't pay the taxes.

E. IYAMA: They couldn't pay the taxes.

IRITANI: Since your father was able to earn enough here . . .

E. IYAMA: Evidently, my father was pretty much business-headed, you know.

IRITANI: You got through high school?

E. IYAMA: Yeah, I got through high school in Japan. I commuted a long ways by train and street car.

IRITANI: You were in Hiroshima.

E. IYAMA: Not in the city but . . .

IRITANI: Outside the city.

E. IIYAMA: In the countryside, so we had to commute to the grammar school. Both my brother and I had bikes, and, of course, that was a luxury in Japan at that time.

IRITANI: And you graduated.

E. IIYAMA: And graduated.

IRITANI: And then what did you do?

E. IIYAMA: After we went to high school, of course, we were good at sports again, so we had a lot of fun in school participating in various sports-- participating in almost everything. We played soccer, baseball, and track, and all these things. We had fun while we were in school. So even though we had difficulty with the language at the beginning, it was kind of fun for us.

IRITANI: You caught up very well.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. And then the year that I was going to graduate, I was debating whether to go to a university in Japan or America. My parents wanted me to stay in Japan and go to a university there. At first I thought of that and then later I thought, oh , well, I'll go to America and see if I could make it on my own. Being a young person and kind of idealistic, I thought I could do that, you know.

IRITANI: So you did?

- E. IYAMA: So I came over by myself. My aunt was over here at the time. Actually she was my uncle's wife. My uncle was . . .
- IRITANI: Your mother's brother?
- E. IYAMA: Yes, my mother's brother--older brother.
- IRITANI: And so you came in what year?
- E. IYAMA: 1930.
- IRITANI: 1930.
- E. IYAMA: Yeah. My uncle passed away about a month before I came over, but my aunt stayed here because she knew I was coming. She helped me get off Angel Island. I went to Angel Island for about a week, I think. And then came out here.
- IRITANI: Do you remember if you made all the arrangements yourself to come over here or did your father?
- E. IYAMA: My father did.
- IRITANI: Your father made the arrangements.
- E. IYAMA: Yeah, he made all the arrangements. He also gave me some money. But after I came here, I had to make all the arrangements like going to the university, I had to go to . . .
- IRITANI: Right. But did you know enough English?
- E. IYAMA: Well, yeah, I knew enough to get by. Of course, we took English while we were in high school, you know.

IRITANI: In Japan.

E. IYAMA: Yes. My pronunciation evidently came back easily. And so I didn't have any problems with my pronunciation. So I was able to get through school easily too because I could go places and talk to people and . . .

IRITANI: While you were in Japan then in high school you took these English classes from teachers who did not really know English, so do you remember how you felt then, because you obviously being at least a nine-year old child--ten-years old, perhaps? You have already developed your English early on, and do you remember how difficult that must have been for you? Do you know? I would have thought . . .

E. IYAMA: There was a young guy in the chugakko. I guess he was from Hawaii. He showed off his pronunciation. But I didn't want to do that. So I pronounced like the Japanese did. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: You made sure you were not a target of the other kids. Very good!

E. IYAMA: But, as I said, when I came back, my pronunciation came back.

IRITANI: And getting into college. . .

E. IYAMA: Well, that was kind of a difficult thing. I went up to the University . . .

IRITANI: Berkeley?

E. IYAMA: Yeah, University of California at Berkeley and they said, "Well, you have to go to high school for one year and you have to take English, math and science." The three things. Well, actually, it turned out that

the English was the only thing I needed. The rest of the stuff I knew more than they were teaching here, because in Japan they are more advanced than here.

IRITANI: But it wasn't in the English language that you learned.

E. IIYAMA: No, but I knew the stuff already, so, you know, it was easy going through the high school. English was the only thing that I had problems with. Like math, the teacher always wanted me to put it up on the board, because I always . . .

IRITANI: You knew it.

E. IIYAMA: None of the others had home work done.

IRITANI: [LAUGHTER]

E. IIYAMA: I always had my home work.

IRITANI: So you did go to one year at Berkeley High School?

E. IIYAMA: I went to Oakland Tech for one year and then I came back to Cal. Of course, I had to take Subject A.

IRITANI: You were staying with your uncle--or your aunt?

E. IIYAMA: No, I was staying with this friend--it's called Kikusui Hotel.

IRITANI: Kikusui.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, hotel. It was a small hotel. It was a rooming house, actually. My parents stayed there before they went back to Japan. They stayed there for --I don't know--for a month or two, whatever was needed before they

left for Japan. And so they knew these people, and my aunt stayed there too before she went back to Japan. When I came over, she was staying there. So when I came over, I got a room there and I stayed, and they were very nice. I roomed and boarded there. So I had the meals there too.

IRITANI: But you didn't have any job or anything. It was just . . .

E. IYAMA: My aunt took me over to meet an old friend whose Issei parents came from the same area in Japan as my parents. My parents were close friends with them and because of that, we children also got to know each other well.

One of the sons, George, was my brother's friend. He said he could hire me to work in his grocery store. That is how I got my first job. I worked there until I started to go to school and saved some money. I was staying with the Babas all this time because they gave me room and board at a very reasonable rate.

After I started at U. C. Berkeley, I worked in the summer time during summer vacation in the fruit ranches. I went out to Concord and worked for a couple of summers. I went out there picking fruit and also helping sort the fruit for canning and things like that and also drying the fruit--they slice and open it up and throw the seeds out. But we couldn't make much money because what did we get? We got something like

\$2.50 a day, I guess, and then we had to pay, of course, for our room and board. It was a dollar or something for room and board, you know. So you didn't have much left. You had \$1.50 or so a day that you made. So even if you worked all summer, you only made about 200 bucks at the most, you know. So I worked there and I couldn't work on weekends because I had lab work to do, because I was taking electrical engineering.

IRITANI: Oh, that was your major.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, I took electrical engineering so there was a lot of lab work.

IRITANI: You started as a freshman and chose electrical engineering right away.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, so I worked it out for about two years. But after that I couldn't make it financially, so I decided I'd go to work for a while. I thought if I worked for a couple of years, I could come back again. But in the meantime I learned that the guys who graduated Cal weren't getting jobs.

IRITANI: The Niseis.

E. IIYAMA: The Niseis. They were going over to Grand Avenue and working for \$40 a week. When I heard that, I thought, "Oh, heck, what's the use of my going back" you know. I worked my head off and saved money and then go back to school and then get nothing. So after working a couple of years, of course, I worked as a driver for cleaners, and then the boss liked my work, so he put me in as a presser in one of the stores, and he

said he was planning to make me a manager of the store. But after working there for a while, I didn't think that was my future, so . . .

IRITANI: That's not your future either.

E. IIYAMA: So then I went over to Grand Avenue and tried working as a warehouse clerk. Mainly warehouse work moving the stuff from the warehouse over to the store and opening the cases and putting them up. Sometimes I had to work in the store too.

IRITANI: Was it a Japanese Import business?

E. IIYAMA: Nippon Dry Goods. So I worked there maybe for over a year. And then I looked for another job. I went out to the country and I worked in the nursery at Shinodas, I think.

IRITANI: In San Leandro?

E. IIYAMA: In San Leandro, yeah. I worked there and that's where I got hay fever.
[LAUGHTER] It affected me there. I don't know whether it was the roses or carnations or what.

IRITANI: Plenty of pollen.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. But, anyway, I worked there for a year or two, and that's when I decided, well, I'm not going back to school, because when I first started, my intention was to work and save and go back. But after working like this, I said to myself, "Well, I may as well continue to work." So then I looked for a better job; if I'm going to work I might as well get in to civil

service. It looked like it would be better there than other fields, so I took an exam and I passed the exam and I started work under the County Clerk in the Elections Department.

IRITANI: In Alameda County?

E. IYAMA: Yes, in Alameda County. I worked there until the day before I was evacuated, because my boss, the County Clerk, told me I could work as long as I could. I had to work six months to become a permanent worker. But I only had five months of employment. I got a letter from Mr. Wade (County Clerk) saying that if I were not evacuated, I would continue to be employed there because I was reliable and my work was satisfactory.

IRITANI: So your work--that work you started in--like in--not December, but in probably September or so--of 1941?

E. IYAMA: We left in May so I started around January, I guess. I took the examination earlier.

IRITANI: That would have just been--oh, I see.

E. IYAMA: Five months.

IRITANI: You started to work for the County after World War II began.

E. IYAMA: Yes.

[END TAPE 2, SIDE B.]

[BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE A]

IRITANI: This is Tape 3, Side A, and, Ernie, continue to tell us about your activities at the UC Berkeley and your newly found activism.

E. IIYAMA: Well, one day when I was going to the University, I saw this Nisei girl at the Sather Gate passing out leaflets so I went over to her, got one of the leaflets and started talking to her, and I learned that her name was Nori and they were fighting discrimination against the Negroes at that time. That's what they called the Black people at that time.

IRITANI: That's right.

E. IIYAMA: And that's how I got initiated into learning more about the equal rights of all people. And, of course, through Nori, I got to know her sisters.

IRITANI: Nori Ikeda.

E. IIYAMA: Nori Ikeda and her sister Kazu Ikeda, and Mary Ikeda was another sister. I got acquainted with them and started talking with them, and then, of course, at the school I got acquainted with some students who were Young Democrats and through them I got acquainted with other Young Democrats, and I got into Young Democrats of California. After talking with them and talking with some of the Niseis, we decided that we would organize a Nisei Young Democrats. Because we couldn't get any place in the JACL²⁰ as we disagreed with some of the things that the

²⁰ JACL: Japanese American Citizens League: A membership-driven national civil rights organization of Americans of Japanese ancestry.

leadership of JACL was doing, and, of course, we got isolated because .

..

IRITANI: What year was this?

E. IIYAMA: Well, I actually helped organize the Oakland Chapter of the JACL, because I was a Kibei²¹. I knew the Japanese language, and at that time the Nisei were real young yet, so you had to talk to the parents. That's where my Japanese came in handy, so they asked me to go out and talk to the parents and see if we could get the Niseis to join the JACL for our chapter. And so that's what I did, and I helped organize . . .

IRITANI: 1930 . . .

E. IIYAMA: 1934 I think it was.

IRITANI: And your Young Democrats were formed after that.

E. IIYAMA: After that so maybe in '35 or so. So I talked to several Young Democrats--Niseis who were Democrats and one of them was Yuki Shiozawa. She was working at the County Court House at the time, and when I asked her, "Would you be interested in organizing the Nisei Young Democrats?" she said, "Sure." And it so happened that she had other sisters. She had two other sisters, Mary and Cherry.

IRITANI: Is that Jerry or Cherry?

E. IIYAMA: Cherry. They were well known in the community so they helped organize the chapter-- club--Nisei Young Democratic Club of the East

Bay. We had a meeting every month, had good discussions of different topics, and as we developed the club, we got students to come so we got quite a few students from University of California like Kenny Murase and Ann Saito and others.

IRITANI: Anyway, it was students as well as community people all in Alameda County, basically.

E. IYAMA: Yeah, we had about 40 members.

IRITANI: Oh, really!

E. IYAMA: We had good attendance every time because these people were really interested in everything, and that's how the Nisei Young Democrats developed. We took a position against the Japanese militarists, and we put out resolutions against sending war materials to Japan. We sent resolutions to our own government saying that they should stop sending scrap iron and oil to the Japanese militarists. This was before the war, of course.

IRITANI: Yeah, quite a ways before the war.

E. IYAMA: Yeah.

IRITANI: But Japan was already--not quite at war with China.

E. IYAMA: Well, they were going into Manchuria and China already. Manchuria, they went in there in the early '30s, you know. So there was that

²¹ Kibei: A native U. S. citizen born of Issei Japanese parents but educated largely in Japan.

tendency already, so we knew where the Japanese military government was going.

IRITANI: But at the time you were in Japan . . .

E. IIYAMA: Oh, not when I was in Japan.

IRITANI: . . .you didn't think in these terms at all?

E. IIYAMA: No, I wasn't political at that time. I wasn't--didn't get political until I went to the University and got in contact with these people. And I met a lot of good people in the Young Democrats--Carey McWilliams was one. I got a letter from him in fact. He was in the--what was that--Immigration and Housing or something like that--committee of State of California and he was working with the immigrants, mainly from Mexico. When I was leaving to go into camp, he gave me a letter too and said he knew my character and he said I was of good character and intelligent.

IRITANI: When you went into camp, you went into where? Tanforan?

E. IIYAMA: Tanforan, yeah.

IRITANI: In May you went to Tanforan.

E. IIYAMA: We were bussed from near the courthouse of Alameda.

IRITANI: Some people went in in April to camp.

E. IIYAMA: There were a few in April.

IRITANI: But in Tanforan they didn't go in that early, I guess.

E. IIYAMA: I don't know. Yes, some people may have been in earlier, but maybe not because we were sent into the horse stalls too, you know.

IRITANI: Oh, you were.

E. IIYAMA: So I assumed that the earlier ones were the ones who did go into the horse stalls, and the ones who came in later went into the barracks.

IRITANI: Now, you were a bachelor.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. I was a bachelor, and four of us went in as a family.

IRITANI: Four bachelors.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. Haruo Najima--he was next door to me. I don't know why--maybe he wanted to finish his school. He wanted to stay, so he said he wanted to go in with us. His family moved out.

IRITANI: Oh, out of the whole area.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, they moved out of the area and I think they went to Fresno. They either had relatives out there or something.

IRITANI: They thought it was safe in Military Zone 2, but it wasn't.

E. IIYAMA: No, it wasn't. Anyway, so he wanted to stay with us. And then this guy, Ben Murota was the same thing. He didn't want to go in with his family. I don't know if they moved out or not, but he only had his father and sister. But he decided to stay, so he wanted to come in with us. And then there was another fellow, Mike--I don't remember what his name . .

IRITANI: It's all right if you've forgotten his name.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, his name was Mike Okusa.

IRITANI: It's OK.

E. IIYAMA: Anyway, the four of us went in under one number as a family, so that we could be together. That's why we got one room to ourselves, the four of us, when we went in there. Well, I can't remember much --I remember some of the activities that I got into when I was in the Young Democrats. You know, the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organization] was a youth movement also.

IRITANI: Did you take the Young Democrats Club into Tanforan too?

E. IIYAMA: We didn't take it in but . . .

IRITANI: You didn't gather . . .

E. IIYAMA: As a group, we were all there. That's why the discussion group that she [Chizu] was talking about was the Nisei Young Democrats as a core. We didn't organize it as a Young Democrats, but just a discussion group. So we had discussions every so often. I forgot how often we did it but . . .

IRITANI: In Tanforan.

E. IIYAMA: In Tanforan and also in Topaz. Because we had this group--like when we went into Tanforan, being a Kibei and knowing Japanese, they felt,

well, maybe they should run me as one of the Councilmen, and that's how I got to run as a Councilman in Tanforan. I got elected.

IRITANI: Oh.

E. IIYAMA: But after Tanforan, I went into Topaz and I was elected Councilman there again, and . . .

IRITANI: Do you remember what your duties were as Councilman in Tanforan?

E. IIYAMA: Well, we didn't do much. It was more or less trying to quiet the camp down because there was so much commotion going on, you know, fights and things. These were just fights with individuals. They just get angry at each other for saying something and had fights.

IRITANI: Right.

E. IIYAMA: Like in one case, I think it was a Kibei guy who hit a Nisei, you know, in the stomach or something and the Nisei brought up a suit. So I had to talk to them and I said if he brings up a suit, he'd have to go to court and it's going to be messy. I said, "Why don't you drop it? After all, it was just a fight because you got angry at each other. It's not like you lost something and then fought over it." So then I called them both together and they talked it out and said OK and shook hands.

IRITANI: Arbitrator.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. So we settled that. That was one thing [Chuckles]. We were only there a few months, so, you know, by the time we got things

settled, we were moving out already. Then, of course, when we went to Topaz, when I got off the bus, it was kind of interesting, because the guy who was head of Housing was there and he walked up to me and I recognized him, a fellow who went to Cal with me. What the heck was he doing here? His name was Art Eaton.

IRITANI: Caucasian?

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. And he came up and said, "Hey, how about working for me?" I said, "Sure, I'm not doing anything, sure."

IRITANI: [LAUGHTER] That's right.

E. IIYAMA: OK. So that's how I got into Housing, you see, right away. So I was made the head of Housing there. [Chuckles] We had to house evacuees every other week. They brought in 250 people each time.

IRITANI: Is that right?

E. IIYAMA: One block at a time, you know.

IRITANI: Boy! People were brought in basically one block at a time, then.

E. IIYAMA: In our camp, they did.

IRITANI: Oh, really?

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. And--but--see, like she said, sometimes the roof wasn't on. The places weren't complete sometimes, and I tried to stop--we tried to stop the people from being sent in. We said it's not ready yet so how about holding it for another week, but they said they can't do it. They said the

Army won't do it. They said the Army goes by schedule and they said when they set something, they go by that. They won't change it. So we couldn't change it. That's why when the last and final group came, there was a weather report that we're going to have a big thunder storm that night, so we asked them to stop it because the roofs aren't on. I said there's going to be babies in there. But they wouldn't stop them from coming, and the rain came, so we had to commandeer cars and trucks in the middle of the night, and we took the babies and mothers to the hospital. Then we had a fight with the doctors there. Doctors said, "These rooms are for emergencies." I said, "Well, this is an emergency." I said, "We'd better bring them in." So we brought them in anyway.

[LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: Get them under a roof.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah! I said they can't sleep out there without roofs in this rain storm. So we brought the babies and mothers into the hospital. But these doctors, you know, were like that.

IRITANI: Yup, that was their territory.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah, but anyway, in time, of course, we had some problems because some people wanted to be next to the friend of theirs. "Oh, we can't do that kind of thing now." I said., "You gotta take what you get." If the problem is something that, you know, the roof is leaking or something,

that's another thing, I think, we can handle, but I said as far as where you want to get a room, we can't do it. I said, "You must go where you are assigned." That was one of the problems. People would call up and say, "I want to go over here." [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: So how long were you in Housing?

E. IIYAMA: Well, Housing was until they came in. Because they were the last group. It was from . . .

IRITANI: Santa Anita.

E. IIYAMA: Santa Anita was the last group that came in. That was the night that we had the thunder storm. But, anyway, so after that-- maybe a couple of weeks after that, because we had to get them settled, but once they were settled, there wasn't anything to do in housing, you know.

IRITANI: That's right.

E. IIYAMA: They told me, "Well, you're going to be out of a job."

IRITANI: Right.

E. IIYAMA: So I said, "OK." But I was going to get paid for being an Executive Secretary of the Council. We can't get two pays, but I would have gotten paid for that, if I lost this other job anyway.

IRITANI: So what was your pay?

E. IIYAMA: \$19 [a month]. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: You got top pay, \$19 a month! Yeah! I always tell, you know, when I talk to kids, I say even if you were a brain surgeon and you were an internee, you would get \$19 a month. So now you are just a Council Member getting paid for that.

E. IIYAMA: But then LaFabrique, the head of the Social Welfare Department where she [Chizu] worked . . .

IRITANI: How do you spell that?

E. IIYAMA: LaFabrique--L-A-F-A-B-R-I-Q-U-E, I think it is a French name. He was a very nice guy--progressive person. He asked me to work for him because he can't fight the administration, because he's part of the administration. So he said he would like to have me come in. We did fine. LAUGHTER] We also became good friends. They took us (Chizu and myself) to Delta for dinner and a movie every so often.

IRITANI: So even if you didn't really need another job to get your pay, you took on . . .

E. IIYAMA: I took the other one, yeah, so I got paid for that one instead of the Council member.

IRITANI: So what position was that labeled in what department?

E. IIYAMA: I don't know what they labeled me there.

IRITANI: What department was it?

E. IIYAMA: It was top pay so [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: But that was in social work . . .

E. IIYAMA: So I wasn't just a clerk. I think they called me the coordinator.

IRITANI: How much work did you have to do under him?

E. IIYAMA: Well, it was mostly when we were negotiating with the administration.

That was what I did mostly, and I wasn't in there long enough to do too much, but one of the things that I brought up was we wanted to bring in Kendo²² and Judo²³ for the Kibeis, because Kibeis didn't have anything to do. Other groups were organizing things like basketball, baseball and things like that, but Kibeis didn't have anything so I brought that up.

Then the administration said, "No, you can't do that. That's martial arts."

IRITANI: The martial arts.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. I said, "That's not martial arts." It's just like wrestling and boxing, you know, sports. We argued with them for a while, and they finally gave in. I said, "Well, you have to look at it this way." I said, "If you don't give them something to do, you are going to have riots or fights. And that is worse than letting them have this stuff." That's what moved them, I think.

IRITANI: Control. They permitted it.

E. IIYAMA: So they got it in.

²² Kendo: Fencing

²³ Judo: Art of weaponless defense.

IRITANI: And how--where did you get the equipment?

E. IIYAMA: Well, they knew where the equipment was--they sent for it--had people-- friends go over there and get it for them and had them send it in. That's how we got the equipment, mats, etc., in.

IRITANI: Very good. So kendo--of course, you have to have plenty of equipment for them.

E. IIYAMA: Oh, yeah. They had to be brought in.

IRITANI: Kendo, you had to have your mask.

E. IIYAMA: Masks.

IRITANI: Wow!

E. IIYAMA: So all these things were brought in, but, of course, as far as transporting it, you had the government do it, so it's just a matter of getting it. You had to have somebody who knew where the things were and have someone go and get it.

IRITANI: Right. So, do you remember any other incidents relative to your job? Because you were supposed to be the one to keep things under control.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. Well, I didn't have too many things that came up.

IRITANI: Everything just went along.

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. Most of the things, we were able to settle within our own community. We were able to talk to the Block Manager and get their help.

IRITANI: Right.

E. IYAMA: If anyone had a problem, we would talk to the Block Manager and say can you help get this solved.

IRITANI: You mentioned that you were not there very long.

E. IYAMA: No, we were only there until I think it was April--April of '43. I volunteered to serve in the Army. That's another thing. While we were in there, being one of the leaders, I thought that I should give my position and urge others to take a similar position. And so at the big camp meeting and at the staff meeting, I spoke and I told them my position, how I felt about it.

IRITANI: Oh, what meeting was this?

E. IYAMA: Camp meeting.

IRITANI: Yeah. About . . .

E. IYAMA: On this business of volunteering for the Army and on the whole question of answering the two questions.

IRITANI: [Questions Nos.] 27 and 28.²⁴

E. IYAMA: "Yes, Yes," or "No, No," or "Yes and No" or whatever.

IRITANI: Right.

²⁴ Questions 27 and 28: Loyalty questionnaire entitled "Statement of United States Citizenship of Japanese Ancestry" (Selective Service Form 304A) No. 27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered?

No. 28: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?

- E. IYAMA: So it was on that. Of course, it's primarily whether you volunteer for the Army or not. That was the main thing.
- IRITANI: At that time. And so the Nisei recruiter came in and held a big meeting?
- E. IYAMA: No, they didn't have a meeting.
- IRITANI: Oh, they didn't have a Nisei recruiter there?
- E. IYAMA: No.
- IRITANI: Oh, because MIS [Military Intelligence Service] had sent ten recruiters from the MIS program to the ten camps--one to each camp.
- E. IYAMA: Yeah.
- IRITANI: But you didn't remember a recruiter?
- E. IYAMA: Well, not at a meeting. They came in and talked to people but that was it.
- IRITANI: Individuals.
- E. IYAMA: Yeah.
- IRITANI: OK.
- E. IYAMA: They talked to the leaders and things like that.
- IRITANI: And so you stood up and do you remember . . .
- E. IYAMA: Yeah, I told them my position. Of course, my position was a little different because I said personally I felt that this was a war that had to be fought. And I felt that we should go fight this war. That's the reason that I volunteered. I said maybe others have a different reason, but even

aside from that, I said it would help prove the loyalty of the Japanese Americans too by doing this, and I said, of course, the segregated unit is another thing that you may not like, but I said, "The only way we can get publicity about the Niseis is to have a unit of Japanese Americans because if we just scattered in among the Army, nobody will know about us. So I said even though it's not a good idea to have a segregated unit, in some sense, in this instance, I thought it was better for us to fight as a unit--as a Japanese American unit. So although I first didn't like it, I said I think I go for it, and so I said I support volunteering for forming this Army. So I urged others to do the same. Of course, I had an Issei come up to me afterward and say, "Why did you . . ."

IRITANI: Only one person?

E. IIYAMA: I only remember one Issei coming to me.

IRITANI: One Issei or Nisei?

E. IIYAMA: Issei.

IRITANI: Issei came up to you. But only the one?

E. IIYAMA: Yeah. I only had the one.

IRITANI: Wow! That surprises me, because I thought there would be more reaction because so many people in other camps have told me about the responses of others.

E. IIYAMA: Well, I don't know what the reasoning was of the Isseis, but . . .

- IRITANI: So did you volunteer at that point?
- E. IYAMA: Yeah, I volunteered.
- IRITANI: And then what happened?
- E. IYAMA: Well, a month later I got pneumonia [LAUGHTER] and went to the hospital. I had lung pneumonia. I went to the hospital and then I was recuperating, but they wouldn't take me into the Army because it would be too hard, you know.
- IRITANI: Too hard on your body?
- E. IYAMA: Yeah. I was the only one left. [LAUGHTER]
- IRITANI: So you were declared 4-F because of that?
- E. IYAMA: Yeah, they wouldn't take me.
- IRITANI: They wouldn't take you. OK.
- E. IYAMA: That's why I didn't go, you know. A lot of people afterwards said, "Hey, how come you volunteered . . ."
- IRITANI: You talked like that . . .
- E. IYAMA: And didn't go. [LAUGHTER]
- IRITANI: You did, but . . .
- E. IYAMA: Well, when I meet people I can explain it, but you know, people--they just see the surface and say, "Oh, you didn't go." you know.
- [LAUGHTER]
- IRITANI: That's right. And then what happened?

E. IYAMA: Well, then, of course, we went--she went out to go see--she was going to school . . .

IRITANI: We'll just pause at this point. Let's see, I don't think there is a pause.

IRITANI: OK, we're going to go back a little bit to the time you were forming or had already formed your Nisei Young Democrats, and you wanted to add something to that story, so go ahead.

E. IYAMA: Yeah, I just thought that the, you know, the internment brought all the progressives out together because we were all interested in doing something about it, and that's why we . . .

IRITANI: Mention those names.

E. IYAMA: Well, one of them like Isamu Noguchi came up from Los Angeles.

IRITANI: He's a sculptor.

E. IYAMA: Sculptor--and he came and asked us, "What can we do?" And, of course, Karl Yoneda . . .

IRITANI: Where did he live?

E. IYAMA: He lived in San Francisco.

IRITANI: And he was a union . . .

E. IYAMA: He was a union member of ILWU.

IRITANI: Organizer?

E. IYAMA: Well, he was a union member. I don't know if he was an organizer at that time, but he and this Tex--what was his last name? Anyway, they called him Tex Tsukahara.

IRITANI: OK. That's fine.

E. IYAMA: We talked with these people and also to some unions, like the Steel Workers and Electrical Workers but felt that we could not do anything because we had no support. It was interesting because even after we got into camp we met a couple of Isseis who served in the First World War. They came to our discussion group and wanted to talk with us about our situation.

IRITANI: So your discussion group in camp really grew.

E. IYAMA: Yeah.

IRITANI: It attracted a lot of new people

E. IYAMA: Yeah, we had a lot of new people. Many progressive Kibeis and some Isseis who fought in the First World War came.

IRITANI: Including Chizu Kitano at that time, and that was in '43 or '42 still?

E. IYAMA: '42 and into '43.

IRITANI: And so how did this romance progress? Who wants to tell me about that?

E. IYAMA: Oh, I don't know. It sort of grew on us. At first we just knew each other because she joined the discussion group and we were talking about it.

Of course, it interested me because I got a new face that was interested in this stuff.

IRITANI: Nice young lady as well.

E. IIYAMA: But as things went on, you know, we got to know each other a little better and, of course, this Kazu Ikeda was another one. She kept prompting us. She said, "Chizu likes you." [LAUGHTER]

C. IIYAMA: He chased me. That's right. He had never had a real girl friend before, and so it was new experience for him too. But it was interesting. I think he introduced me to some ideas that I never had before, and I think I was very grateful for that. He's much older than I am. He's ten years older and all, and until then, most of the guys I went around with were maybe a couple of years older than me but not quite that much older. But he was very responsible and very thoughtful, and so he brought in some kind of maturity in my life, and I responded to that. But I do want to talk about the camp, because that was one of the parts in my life that was so difficult. And I brought a lot of difficulty to my parents. When I think about it now, I wonder whether I would have done the same things I did at that time. But going to the discussion groups I began to understand what the war was about. We touched upon the Japanese invasion of China and the persecution of the Jews, although the death camps at that time we didn't know about. But there was this kind of

understanding of the outside world. So when the questionnaire came out, 27 and 28 . . .

IRITANI: Did you have to sign as well?

C. IIYAMA: I had to sign it as well. And so when that came around, there was a lot of worries on the part of people--what they should do. And this group decided to volunteer because they felt that the war against Fascism really had to be won. And that the Fascist countries--including Imperial Japan--was hurting people of other countries, and therefore we could not oppose this war. But it was interesting because there were block meetings all over.

[END TAPE 3, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE B]

C. IIYAMA: OK. When our block meeting opened, it was dominated by the Issei and Kibei who were very unhappy about what was going on, including some who were pro-Japan. It became more and more like a rally for everybody to vote "No, No." And so I did get up. It was very quiet when I spoke because there had been no woman who had spoken, and then I was a young girl. I was really talking to the young men in the audience, most of whom were maybe 18--anywhere from 15 on to young kids from 15 on to about 20. And I was talking with them--they were friends of ours from Chinatown, and so I said to them, "Don't let

anybody rush you into a judgment, that you need to think carefully about your future, you need to know really about why you are making those answers. Think carefully because your future depends on it." And when I finished, there was a silence--real silence. And the meeting just kind of broke up. And on the way out, one of the people stated, "You better watch out because she's going to get beaten up." And somebody else--a neighbor from one of the neighboring barracks came over and told my father, "You better watch out for your daughter because they are gunning for her. That means they are going to beat her up." And so my father and mother got very frightened, and as they were talking they told my father, "It's your fault. You sent her to college and this is what happens." And my poor parents had to take a lot of --lot of anger from the Isseis and the Kibeis. And there were pro-Japanese elements there.

IRITANI: Oh, absolutely.

C. IYAMA: They said to me, shouting, "What are you going to do when Japan wins the war?" But it was so bad that I think my father talked to my sister Kiyo, and her husband came for me to eat breakfast the next morning at their mess hall. And they borrowed an Administration car so that I wouldn't be beaten up on the way back or whatever. I ate over in their block for quite a while. I decided to leave as soon as I could, because it was a dangerous situation.. But more than the danger is that my

presence reminded the people in my block of what I had said, which was really so innocuous. It wasn't like I told everybody to write "Yes, Yes." I didn't say anything like that. So I just stayed at my sister's most of the time, ate at her place, and then I did go out of Topaz.

IRITANI: She was in a different block?

C. IYAMA: She was in a different block, further away. And her block--most of the blocks were fairly quiet. It was just our block. But it was because some of the Isseis and Kibeis were ranting and raving and trying to get everyone to write "No, No." I felt somebody had to say something. And looking back on it now, I gave my mother and father so much grief. They were ostracized. The women at the mess hall wouldn't give them any tea and only a few--he had about two good friends who stayed with him all that time. My father was the head of the block. He was the kind of person who wanted to be of service to everyone, but they forgot it all in this anger. It's like a crowd psychology. When I left, my father and mother gave a sigh of relief that I was gone. But it was a very difficult time for them. Previous to that I had wanted to leave because although I wasn't going to school at that time, it was possible for me to leave camp on a temporary leave. I had a scholarship offer when I was in Santa Anita, but my mother wouldn't let me take it. And then when we got to

Topaz, there was that possibility of student leave, so that later I left. But before that, my sister and I wanted so much to get out of camp . . .

IRITANI: Your sister . . .

C. IYAMA: My sister Sadako and I wanted to get out of camp. My sister Masako left to get married to a soldier--her husband--Hiroshi Saito. He was a soldier so she was able to leave.

IRITANI: He was stationed . . .

C. IYAMA: He was stationed in many different places. This was like before the 442nd. He was already in the Army (before WW II), and she went out to join him. I think she went to Chicago. My sister Sadako and I wanted so much to leave that we applied for a job. You know, they had temporary job listings--you go on out and then you come on back.

IRITANI: Do you know what month this was?

C. IYAMA: This was, let's see, I'm thinking we left in April so it must have been something like about November or December of 1942 before the Questionnaire, I think.

IRITANI: You left in April on a permanent leave.

C. IYAMA: Yes, I left in April of 1943. But before that there were postings of short-term leaves, so my sister and I applied for a job "turkey plucking."

IRITANI: Turkey plucking?

C. IYAMA: You have to pluck the feathers of the turkey. We would go to the turkey farm and pluck feathers. We were so desperate at that time Suddie and I thought, "Why don't we try that?" But my mother would not sign us out. And then later I met somebody who did go turkey plucking and they said, "Boy, was your mother right!" It was a terrible, terrible job, that blood was dripping out of the turkey, and it was hot and it smelled so badly, and so I felt that once in a while parents are right.

[LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: That's right.

C. IYAMA: But anyway, we did leave in April 1943, and Ernie and I were thinking about getting married. But we didn't get married in camp. My mother didn't approve of Ernie because he was too radical for her and she thought I should marry somebody who was an engineer or a doctor. She got upset.

IRITANI: [INAUDIBLE] same thing.

C. IYAMA: And she said that Ernie doesn't have a job and he didn't have those skills. So she was against it but my father didn't say anything. He was just mad at me. But, anyway, we just went out.

IRITANI: When you went to . . .

C. IYAMA: We went to Salt Lake City, and then we got married in Chicago.--We told my parents, but they didn't write anything for a long time. And I

knew that they were suffering from whatever I had said, and also because I got married to Ernie. I was practically disowned until I got a baby when they must have decided this was for real. When my first daughter was born, my parents sent me a present. My mom had crocheted an afghan made out of left-over wool yarn. It was nondescript funny colors, but it was so dear to me, because it was something my mother made. I still have it. But, you know, funny colors--black, orange, brown, blue--because it was odds and ends of yarn
[LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: That's all she had.

C. IYAMA: That's all she had, but she put it together. However, I also brought them some more grief when we were in New York. We went from Chicago to New York City, because Ernie's friends suggested we go to New York. So I decided not to go to the University (of Chicago). We lived in New York for several years. But while we were there, there was a drive--a blood drive for the people of China. Well, we felt very sorry about what had happened to people in China, so we joined the Red Cross Blood Drive. An AP [Associated Press] photographer was there and he took my picture, giving blood to the Chinese for their war relief. The picture went all over the country. Someone cut it out and put it on the Topaz kitchen board so everybody could see. Then my poor parents got it for

that, and that was when my father said to my sisters in camp he just remembers how cute you were when you were little. That memory [LAUGHTER] kind of mitigated the anger, the barbs that they were getting. But they eventually got over that. We went from New York, then came back to Chicago. When we were in Chicago, my sister was there--my sister Masako who got married to the soldier. Later she met one of the Issei men who was leading that Block 34 meeting on the questionnaire, and he was in Chicago. He didn't go to Tule Lake. And he said to my sister, "You know, your sister was right." He decided to change his attitude to stay in the United States. It was the first time I became an activist. First time I took a stand openly and got some very negative reaction. Of course, the progressive group that was there--the Nisei Demo group was very supportive. I'm troubled at this point when the Sansei put all these "No, Nos" on as heroes, because I have other experiences with them of really being threatened for something that I said.

IRITANI: Not just saying.

C. IYAMA: Take it easy.

IRITANI: Think.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, but you know, at that time it was inflammatory.

IRITANI: Right. With the group you were [INAUDIBLE] to.

- C. IYAMA: That's right. Most Niseis in our group went "Yes, Yes." I was afraid that the young Niseis in the block would be misled by this rally that was going on. But again, who knows? But I did feel sorry for my parents.
- IRITANI: Did you have any inkling later of the number of people in your block that did go to Tule Lake? Were there some?
- C. IYAMA: I think there was one family that I know of from my block, and I think they were the only one. And they went . . .
- IRITANI: After all that.
- C. IYAMA: After all that, and they went because they didn't want their sons to be drafted-- to get into the Army. They wanted to protect them from going into the Army. They had two boys about my age. So they went with their parents to Tule Lake, but they later came out.
- IRITANI: They didn't go to Japan.
- C. IYAMA: No. It was hard. It was a terrible decision for people to have to make, especially for the young boys. You know, it was really hard, because they had to face service.
- IRITANI: What job did you get?
- C. IYAMA: So when I went out to Chicago . . .
- IRITANI: Not turkey plucking?

C. IYAMA: No, not turkey plucking, thank goodness. When we went to Chicago, I got a job in a factory, but I was in the office part of the factory. But it was a heat-treating factory, and you know how hot Chicago gets. And the heat-treating plant was right next to it. It was open and it was hot--really hot. And I got a job there, and I often wondered if I impeded the war effort because I had a typing job, and my typing was so cruddy . . .

IRITANI: [LAUGHTER]

C. IYAMA: I had all these formulas and numbers, and I had to get that right. I thought, "Oh, my God, I wonder if I really messed it up."
[LAUGHTER] But they kept me, and the people were nice. People in Chicago were very friendly. And then we decided to go to New York. Do you want to talk about New York?

IRITANI: Before you get to New York, how you got out to go to Chicago to get married. At what point did you make that decision? You didn't go together, did you?

C. IYAMA: No, we went . . .

E. IYAMA: No, but we agreed that we were going to get married out there, so as I said, I got pneumonia too for one thing. I had to recuperate a little from that, so after I recuperated enough, I went out and I went to a nursery to work outdoors because I thought because of my pneumonia that would help.

C. IYAMA: Did it help you?

E. IYAMA: Huh?

C. IYAMA: Did it help you?

E. IYAMA: Yeah, the fresh air helped my lungs. I also quit smoking. It didn't pay much but that was the first job that I took when I went out. I worked there for a while. And then, of course, we got married and then we went to New York--friends said it would be better to come out there.

IRITANI: And what did you work at in New York?

E. IYAMA: New York, I had experience as a presser in a cleaners.

IRITANI: Right.

E. IYAMA: And I couldn't work continuously on any job yet, because I get tired from recovering from pneumonia. With a presser, I could get a part-time job for half a day. And so that's why I took that job, and it paid fairly well for that time. And I worked there for a while, and then eventually I thought maybe we might do better if I got into the business. And there was a small cleaning business that was up for sale so we bought it. But we couldn't get insurance and one time somebody tried to break in, but fortunately the guy upstairs heard it and he started moving around. I guess that scared him away, so that he had all the cleaning stuff outside there on the floor, but he didn't take it, so I was wondering . . .

IRITANI: Out on the sidewalk?

E. IYAMA: Well, in the back, you know, in the basement. So I picked everything up and hung them up, and those that were dirty I had them recleaned and put them up. There were a few things that were missing. I asked these customers if they would be willing to take it out on the next cleaning bill. They said OK. So I didn't have to pay out much.

IRITANI: Very good.

E. IYAMA: So we were lucky in that. But right after that, we . . .

IRITANI: During the time you were doing the cleaning, you were there? Were you working?

C. IYAMA: Yes, I was working, but we had some interesting experiences. First of all, we met Issei men and women who were very different from the Issei people we knew. And there were people--many of them were from Okinawa, a whole group of them. They were progressive in their views because they were very anti-Japan, because Japan had seized their island.

IRITANI: That's right.

C. IYAMA: And they felt they were treated as colonists. They were very good to us progressives, and we found a little niche for ourselves in New York. They told us some interesting stories. I wish that I had done some oral history with them because they did some rather creative things. For

example, Japanese training ships used to come to New York. This is before World War 11. And when they came, the Japanese Issei would borrow a tugboat and on the tugboat, they would have these big signs saying, "Down with the Emperor." They would go around and around the harbor to show that there was dissension--that there were people who felt differently about Japan's policies and the Emperor. And they would talk about things like that. There were some real characters in that group. We were really kind of fascinated with them--people who were writers, and artists, carpenters, and businessmen and teachers. We met people who were working for the OWI, Office of War Information, and we met this woman author from Japan. We met Japanese refugees as well--people who were refugees from Japan like Yasuo Kuniyoshi who is an artist there with his wife.

IRITANI: Yasuo?

C. IYAMA: Kuniyoshi. And then Taro Yashima. In fact, we used to have dinner with Taro Yashima and his wife, Miye Yashima. They were poor and I could remember when we went for dinner, I was just really surprised because we had dinner on a two-plate stove--two-plate stove but the most delicious dinner. She was a wonderful cook. One was rice and the other one, okazu, but she did such a good job. I was just amazed, because I'm not that good of a cook. They were interesting people--who

they talked about, what it was like when they were in Japan. They had been very active in the progressive movement--both of them artists. Artists seem to be very much on the edge of progressive thought. Mitsuye spoke about being beaten up in jail in Japan for her activities and lost her baby.

IRITANI: In Japan?

C. IYAMA: In Japan they were really persecuted, so they came to the United States. But we met them in New York.

IRITANI: Probably in the 1930s.

E. IYAMA: You know, Mako is their son.

C. IYAMA: And we met, you know, Eddie . . .

E. IYAMA: Shimano.

C. IYAMA: Shimano who is a talented writer and his wife who also writes.

IRITANI: Shimano?

C. IYAMA: Shimano.

IRITANI: Shimano.

C. IYAMA: He's from Los Angeles and his wife, Kathy, who was hakujin.

IRITANI: Kathy or T - H or . . .

C. IYAMA: Katherine, I - N-E. Katherine. But we met so many different groups of people. I never met Isseis like these before. And then the refugees and people from Los Angeles.

IYAMA: They were Okinawans.

C. IYAMA: Very fascinating time. I enjoyed New York. I guess the first thing that I felt when I went to New York was the freedom of New York City. We had been told, "Don't speak Japanese; don't get into groups of more than three, don't call attention to yourself . . ."

IRITANI: In Chicago?

C. IYAMA: Well, when we were coming out of camp.

IRITANI: When you were coming out.

C. IYAMA: Actually, we stayed in Chicago for only a few months. We didn't stay that long.

E. IYAMA: Well, the first one was.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, the first one was three months. And it was kind of like a stopping-off place, and then we went to New York. And when we went there, just that feeling of freedom because everyone seems to be speaking another language. And everybody is dressed differently. I said to Ernie, "Gee, I could wear a kimono and walk down wearing a kimono and nobody would pay any attention to me." You're just part of the scene. It was really a feeling of freedom that I had lost for such a long time, being in camp. Actually, I was only in the camp a year, but it felt like much longer. I enjoyed New York very much. And I did go to work. I worked with Psychology Corporation in which we were doing

all kinds of questionnaires--grading questionnaires that went out, etc. And also doing some interviewing for people's opinions. And it was fun. And I did that until I got pregnant. I left at some point, because I was getting pretty heavy. When I look back, I wish I did some oral interviewing because those people . . .

E. IYAMA: Joe Oyama was there too.

C. IYAMA: Joe and Sammy. Do you know Joe and Sammy Oyama?

IRITANI: Joe and . . .

C. IYAMA: Oyama and Sammy. His wife is Sammy. S-A-M-M-Y.

IRITANI: Sammy?

C. IYAMA: Sammy Oyama

E. IYAMA: O-Y-A-M-A.

IRITANI: Oyama.

C. IYAMA: Oyama, yeah. He had a grocery store. And he's a writer. She's a writer too. There was this group of people who were drawn primarily by their antipathy to imperialistic Japan. Nori was one of the people there. We met Alice who was also there so we met some of our friends from the camp.

IRITANI: They came out to New York?

C. IYAMA: We had a group of people who met often and enjoyed a good social and intellectually stimulating life.

E. IYAMA: Of course, there was the JACD [Japanese American Committee for Democracy].

C. IYAMA: That's right. We were active in the Japanese American Committee for Democracy, and that was a left-wing group and it was on the Attorney General's list. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: Probably.

C. IYAMA: We'd meet in New York City--Manhattan where the JACD office was located, and we would be on top of a night club. Night club was down below. They had wonderful jazz downstairs. And we would have our dances, and sometimes it must have bothered them. They would tell us in a nice way that we were too noisy. We thought they were pretty noisy too--jazz going on. One of the activities that we sponsored was dances for the servicemen who were going overseas. It was like a USO [United Service Organization] for service people. Again we made a lot of other Nisei friends. Some came into JACD and helped us with our activities. I'm so sorry we never met Yuriko Kochiyama. I bet she was there at that time.

IRITANI: I imagine.

C. IYAMA: Yeah. But we never met.

E. IYAMA: We met her out here.

C. IYAMA: We met her out here. She's such a remarkable woman.

- E. IYAMA: I guess she heard about us too because . . .
- C. IYAMA: And she said, "Oh, I heard about you." She knew Kazu. But, anyway, we had, I thought, a very good time in New York. We really enjoyed it.
- E. IYAMA: There again we met people like Pete Seeger (the folk singer) who came around.
- C. IYAMA: His wife is Yoshiko, a Japanese American woman.
- E. IYAMA: What was the black fellow's name now (Canada Lee)-- Sono Osato was another one.
- C. IYAMA: Originally Sono Osato.
- IRITANI: Sono Osato was the dancer.
- C. IYAMA: We never met her. But Michi --Michi was an actress. She was a beautiful woman. We knew her from camp.
- E. IYAMA: Kobe now.
- C. IYAMA: We knew her in Topaz. And she wanted to be an actress. She came in the wrong period of time. But she did do a play with Canada Lee.
- E. IYAMA: Canada Lee.
- C. IYAMA: We met people--those with different careers (as compared to our friends in California). Whenever people came by, we would have lectures, discussions, workshops, and parties. And I got my baby Patti at that time, and she was just a delight.
- IRITANI: That was 1945.

- C. IYAMA: Always been her whole life. So that was our stay in New York. You got anything you want to say about New York, Ernie?
- E. IYAMA: The first place we stayed in was kind of interesting too. They had Hawaiian seamen.
- C. IYAMA: We had some friends who were in the war. We knew some men in the merchant marine and they would go to Murmansk, Russia to bring supplies to Russia. One of them was killed. They were Japanese Americans in the National Maritime Union. They would come to visit in between their ship runs and tell us about their adventures.
- E. IYAMA: There was this Issei fellow who was a cabinetmaker, Mr. Nishino. There was Suzuki. That's where we met Lewis Suzuki.
- C. IYAMA: Oh, yeah. And Lewis Suzuki is an artist.
- IRITANI: How do you spell it?
- E. IYAMA: L-E-W-I-S. That's how we spelled it.
- C. IYAMA: OK.
- E. IYAMA: L-E-W-I-S.
- C. IYAMA: Suzuki.
- IRITANI: I never heard that name.
- C. IYAMA: He is an artist. He lives in Berkeley. And we still see him. But we met him in New York.
- IRITANI: Very different from your childhood.

C. IYAMA: So different from my YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] and UC Berkeley type of people. But it was very exciting. Again, it showed me another kind of a world.

IRITANI: There is a different life out there.

C. IYAMA: Out there, it was fun. We lived in this house that was three stories high.

E. IYAMA: [INAUDIBLE]

C. IYAMA: We lived in a loft. It took forever to . . .

E. IYAMA: One story was about two stories high instead of one story.

C. IYAMA: It was like six stories and we'd have to carry the baby and the groceries up. It got to be too much, so we decided to move where it's much more conducive to family life. I had a friend Setsuko Nishi. Do you know Setsuko Nishi? Doctor Nishi. I knew her in Santa Anita.

IRITANI: She was a doctor?

C. IYAMA: No, she has a Ph.D. And she was--at the time I met her she was in camp, so she had just graduated college. She is a brilliant woman. She looks like Martha Graham--very glamorous.

E. IYAMA: [INAUDIBLE]

C. IYAMA: But she was looking for somebody to come to Chicago to help her with her son. She was going full time to University of Chicago and she

[END TAPE 3, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE A]

IRITANI: Can you tell us more about Setsuko Nishi?

C. IYAMA: OK. Setsuko Nishi was someone I knew in camp in Santa Anita, and we immediately spotted her as an extremely intelligent woman. Well, through the group that we were meeting with, we were told to contact Setsuko in Chicago. We hoped eventually to get back to California, so we thought that's another step back West. And so we corresponded and she said if I would take care of her son, who was the same age as my daughter at that time, about three, she would take care of the food and offer a place to stay. It was just like being a school girl. So we went.

IRITANI: That was about 1948 then?

C. IYAMA: Yeah, '48, that's when we went. In the meantime, before '48, we had started "Niseis for Wallace." Because at that time Wallace was running for Progressive Party ticket.

IRITANI: That's Henry Wallace.

C. IYAMA: Henry Wallace, not George Wallace. [LAUGHTER] And so we had started "Nisei for Wallace" group and were active politically in national politics. When we got to Chicago, we immediately organized "Nisei for Wallace." At one time we had about sixty people, a lot of people. But because of the red baiting that went on during the

campaign, some people dropped out. They were a little bit afraid. We had maybe about twenty people who really stuck with us all the way. I did this in New York too. We went from door-to-door talking about the candidates and doing a lot of that precinct work. This was a new experience for me.

IRITANI: So in Chicago you were basically baby sitting . . .

C. IYAMA: That's right--Setsuko's.

IRITANI: Ernie, you were doing what?

E. IYAMA: Well, I was working in an industry and with the union.

IRITANI: On what kind of work?

E. IYAMA: Well, I started out as an assembler, assembling florescent lights in lamps. We had a Black union organizer. He said, "You could do better than this. I'll get you a better job." So he got me a job where I could train to become a machinist. So I transferred in there. At the first place, it didn't work out, because this guy was a racist guy, and he wouldn't help me much, you know, and so the union guy told him, "You don't help this guy much." "Oh, yes, I help him." he said, but later on, after they transferred me out, I found out that he got fired because he did not teach other workers. The union agent found me another job where they trained me to become a machinist. So I became a journeyman machinist, and I started work in Chicago and, of course, we went out on

strike a couple of times. What's interesting there--the Negroes are really solid. So when you go out on strike, the Negroes solidly go out. Of course, nobody else dares to stay in there because the Blacks were militant. That's why it was pretty good in this outfit. Well, anyway, I was working in a plant in Chicago, and then they moved out to Morton Grove, which is near . . .

C. IYAMA: Des Plains.

E. IYAMA: Near the . . .

C. IYAMA: It's on the west side.

E. IYAMA: University--what's that university now?

C. IYAMA: Not University of Chicago?

E. IYAMA: No, no. That's the well known university--Northwest University?

IRITANI: North Western? Near Evanston?

E. IYAMA: Yes, Evanston.

C. IYAMA: Oh, is it near Evanston?

E. IYAMA: Yeah. The plant moved up to Morton Grove so I had to commute, and there were times when it snowed and I couldn't.

IRITANI: Get home?

E. IYAMA: There's no freeway at that time, so we had to go all the way through the city. I came home real late sometimes--8:30--9 o'clock sometimes, because we had to weave in between these stalled cars, so we decided to

try to get a place out there. But when we looked in the papers, and we found a house for sale and phoned there, they said, "Sure, come on out." We go out there but as soon as they see our face, you could see the change in their face. They said, "I'm sorry, we sold it." or something. And that went on for, I don't know, maybe a year and a half. We were going out almost every weekend looking for--then we changed the direction. We went further south--a little bit south and we still couldn't get it. And that's why we decided to come back to California.

IRITANI: So what year was that?

E. IYAMA: We came back here in 1955, but . . .

IRITANI: '55. You already had two children by then.

C. IYAMA: That's right.

E. IYAMA: Yeah, that's right. Mark was born in Chicago.

IRITANI: As far as you working with Setsuko Nishi . . .

C. IYAMA: Oh, I didn't work with her that long. We found a place of our own. And then I went to work and I went to school. I went to University of Chicago. This is where I did get my Masters degree in Early Childhood--no, Child Development--Human Development. But I worked also. I worked full time at the Chicago Resettler's Committee while I was going on for my Masters, which meant that I was very busy. But it was just a good job, because, again, what we did at the Chicago Resettler's

Committee was to help people find jobs and housing. We organized all kinds of activities for Japanese Americans relocating from camp. For the Issei, for example. It was like a community center, and we focused on problems facing Japanese Americans, and after the war, the war brides came. We developed a war brides group. We did counseling and promoted activities. By that time I was much more mature. And I was taking classes at the University of Chicago. I had Carl Rogers as my professor. My daughter was just a pleasure. She was such a delightful child, and so easy. We were lucky we had an easy childhood--first one. She was always a part of our activities, so whenever I had an activity, even at night, I'd have her come with me so she would have a chance to meet everybody. She just thrived, you know, with that kind of attention. So we had her by us for a long time. She was the only child. And we were very active in the "Nisei for Wallace" and I became active in the JACL. I helped at some point when they were having one of these national conventions, in charge of publicity. I met Mari . . .

IRITANI: Sakazawa.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, I got to like her very much--Mari Sabusawa.

IRITANI: She married . . .

C. IYAMA: She married James Michener, yes. But she was the first--probably the first JACL woman president of any chapter. She was president of the

Chicago chapter and, again, a very professional-looking woman-- attractive, bright, articulate, poised. I enjoyed her very much. We had new friends. And then Chicago Resettlers. Friendships expanded to many different groups, which was fun for us. I was on the board of the YWCA and Women for Peace. In the 50's we participated in a peace petition drive. We were part of a world-wide drive for signatures to stop nuclear testing at a time when the Americans were into outdoor testing, with the resulting fallout on people. Part of the campaign was sponsored by the Progressive Party and other left wing organizations. So Ernie and I would go on Saturday or Sunday to get signatures. We took Patti along with us. She came dancing along with us. Once we were in the black community and the black people were so supportive. This white man came by and stopped and kept glaring at us.

IRITANI: Was he in a car?

C. IYAMA: No, he was outside the car. He stood by--I think it was by a lamp post or something. He was watching us while we were getting all the signatures, and then he finally came back around and grabbed the petitions from my hand. My daughter began to scream. It seemed like out of no where all these black people came to our support. It looked like they were really going to knock this guy out, because they heard this little girl screaming and we were all agitated and upset. They came and

grabbed him. They said, "What do you want to do with him?" We had been told by, I think it was the Progressive Party, that if anything should happen, tell the police. So then they said, "Shall we . . ." This guy looked so scared. So I said, "I think I want you to let him go." However, we did call and the police came by. They asked us what to do, and we said let him go, so they let him go. The whole City of Chicago was just blanketed with people with this petition drive. We felt at that time such a sense of unity with black people, because they came to our rescue and made sure we were OK. Also in Chicago we did a beach . . .

IRITANI: A what?

C. IYAMA: Beach, B-E-A-C-H. A beach-in. At that time, the beaches were not open to black people or they didn't feel comfortable there. So we were with the young Progressives, and we spent the night out in the beaches. Everybody said, "You spent the night at the beach!." But we did as a group. It was black--we were the only Asians--the blacks, the whites, and us. I was really an activist at that time. Ever since camp, I guess. We were also out on some protests too. But when we were in Chicago, my brother-in-law saw me picketing. I was picketing with the Urban League, because we were trying to get a department store to open up employment of black people. They were hiring Japanese Americans but not blacks, so we were out there. My brother-in-law saw me as he was

passing by. He said he was so embarrassed, because there was this sister-in-law with all these signs and going around shouting. I don't know how I did it, because I was working full time, going to school part time, and active, and had a baby--a child. But she was the kind where you could take anywhere. So she--so then why should I complain when she joined the Socialist Worker's Party when she was at U. C. Berkeley. She has her life that was so different from what we envisioned for her.

[LAUGHTER] I said, well, all those times that she participated in our activities! She came, for example, when we'd go looking for houses and she would come back and say, "So unfair, Mama, so unfair." We would agree, but added we need to fix this. So by the time she was little, she was politicized by our activities.

E. IYAMA: She was very good.

C. IYAMA: She was so good.

E. IYAMA: We would take her to a big meeting and give her some crayons and paper and sit her down near the stage and she would play through the whole evening.

C. IYAMA: She really helped.

E. IYAMA: We'd take her on marches--I just carried her on my shoulder when she got tired.

C. IYAMA: When our family was growing up, we did a lot of camping. We went all over--Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, etc., even up to Cape Breton Island in Canada. And when we returned to California, we kept up on camping trips together with my sisters and brothers and their families. Such good times!

IRITANI: [LAUGHTER] Back to that--ga-sa, ga-sa. So at that point that you couldn't find your house, you decided to come back and that was in 19 . .

E. IYAMA: '55.

IRITANI: '55.

C. IYAMA: And the reason--one of the other reasons we came back was because Chicago got so hot and got so cold and the weather was really cruddy. And my daughter was getting pale from the lack of sun. She's such a cute little girl but she's so pale, and we talked to the doctor.

IRITANI: You have Mark?

C. IYAMA: Mark was born--he was born just when I got my Masters. I said to Ernie, "I didn't get to go on the stage to graduate at Cal because I was in camp; I didn't get to go on the stage in the University of Chicago because I was so pregnant. [LAUGHTER] Mark was about a year when we came out to California. He was a darling baby--so bright, sunny disposition--a wonderful easy child to take care of. I curtailed my activities somewhat and finished my schooling. Mark is brilliant,

graduated U. C. Berkeley as a chemical engineer, with an M. A. from Princeton and now working with Exxon in Texas.

My sister Masako took us under her wing again.

E. IYAMA: Where was she?

C. IYAMA: First she was in Chicago. That was the reason why I went to Chicago. She was so good to us. Then she returned to California, and she wrote to us in Chicago when the snow was all piled up, and all the dirt was on top of that, and garbage was on top of the snow. My sister writes this lovely letter. I should have kept it. It said, "Why don't you come back to California. Our plum trees are blossoming." She has a little plum tree blossom enclosed. And she wrote, "The flowers are beginning to come out." That's when we said we gotta go to California.

IRITANI: Where was she?

C. IYAMA: She was in Berkeley.

IRITANI: And your mother?

C. IYAMA: And my mother and father were in Berkeley. My family was in Berkeley.

IRITANI: They had not gone to the East?

C. IYAMA: No. They came directly to Berkeley.

E. IYAMA: Well, Masako was also in Berkeley.

C. IYAMA: Well, she was all over because her husband was in the Army--in the service. So she went all over. She was in Chicago for a while because he was in that area. But . . .

IRITANI: Your family came back from Topaz.

C. IYAMA: Right to Berkeley.

IRITANI: Where did they live?

C. IYAMA: My brother-in-law Frank was like a Big Daddy for us. He came out earlier from camp and Sus, my second sister's husband both came out earlier to look for a place and to look for a job. They came out before the war was ended and found this house in Berkeley. My parents lived there for the rest of their lives. They bought it for \$6000, and it had a little house in the back as well as the house in the front.

E. IYAMA: Two-bedroom house--two-bedroom apartment on top of the garage in the back.

C. IYAMA: So that people--when my sister Sadako got married to Tom Kawaguchi. . . . She went to Japan after she had gone to Minneapolis and met Tom Kawaguchi who was in the Army . She got married in Japan and then came back. When she came back, she stayed behind my mother's house. When other people returned, they all stayed over at the house in the back.

IRITANI: California and now you're pregnant again.

C. IYAMA: That's right, that's right.

IRITANI: I looked at the date, and I could see you gotta be pregnant.

[LAUGHTER]

E. IYAMA: I'd like to mention one experience I had in the union. When we moved out to Morton Grove, the factory had about 400 workers. Well, I got elected to be steward, and I worked as a steward and helped some of the grievances in there, like there was one black fellow who was washing all the medals. You dipped it into the acid to clean it off, and then you had to tip it over and clean it and put it out. Well, that's the kind of work he was doing. They took him off that work one time. They wanted to put somebody else on it, and they put him some place else, so he came over and asked me about it. And so I looked at the contract, and it said that they can't take a person off a job unless they needed the person some place else. So I went in and talked to the personnel man and had to argue with him, but he finally said OK and put the black fellow back on his old job. Here is what happened. They had a guy come in and take a time study of this man. He said this man was slow, so they put him on another job. We finally got this time study man out. He was causing too much trouble by trying to speed up jobs. I was later elected to be the shop chairman--chief steward. That was an experience for me, because I was used to doing things mildly because of my Japanese background.

[LAUGHTER] I argued--I didn't hammer the table or anything like that; I just talked, you know, try to convince them. After I was there for a while, our former chief steward came around and told the guys, "He's chicken." but my business agent was there when he said that. "Oh, no, he's not chicken. He has a different way of talking, that's all." But anyway it was an experience for me because it's a different way of handling things.

C. IYAMA: You never had the experience of being in the union like that. It was just something you read about but--we couldn't get any jobs in the factories out here.

E. IYAMA: It's entirely different the way you do things--negotiations and solving grievances. It is your bread and butter.

IRITANI: That's right.

C. IYAMA: We have a lot of empathy for working people.

E. IYAMA: Yeah, that was an experience for me.

IRITANI: So here we are; you are back at your folks' place.

C. IYAMA: That's right.

IRITANI: And you have to start looking for another job. Did you find one right away?

E. IYAMA: Oh, yeah, it was easy. I got a job right away--machinist job. Machinists were really needed at that time and I started work down here at the . . .

C. IYAMA: Grove Manufacturing .

E. IYAMA: Yeah, something like that. It had Grove in it. I was there for about a year and then a friend of mine said, "Hey, there's another place where you can work. You'd get better pay there". So I went over there and I started to work, then about a month after I worked, the ceiling fell in.
[LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: The ceiling fell?

E. IYAMA: Yeah.

IRITANI: Physically?

E. IYAMA: No, no.

IRITANI: Oh, the whole company.

E. IYAMA: The whole economy went bad. That's the reason why. And the machinists are the first ones to go, because they are the ones who make the things at the bottom--start making it. So I got laid off and then I tried to get jobs in other places, but, of course, machinists are laid off all over so I couldn't get anything. I just worked a week here, a week there, for about a year. So during that time I decided, well, I'm going to get out of this field--machinist field, and I went to night school and took up computer.

IRITANI: Oh, what year was that?

E. IYAMA: '58 was when the depression came. In '61 I started work at the Berkeley Coop, a grocery Super Market as a checker-clerk, and going to night school studying computers. Later the coop started a computer section. So they said, "How about working there." I was still studying and they didn't want to pay an experienced guy because they had to pay more. So they wanted me to do it. I said, "Well, I'll try it." But I said, "I'm just starting, you know, I don't have any experience on this yet." Then they had a fire at the place where they had the computers and the whole thing burned down. So I lost a job, and then they wouldn't hire me back at the coop because, well, they got another guy in there already. They can't hire another guy, so then I had to look for a job, and I guess it was about a month later I saw an ad in the paper, so I went down to Safeway, and they were operating in Oakland. They were a super market. Then I went down there. The guy that was hiring said, "Why did you stop working with coop?" I told them there was a fire there, and it burned down. He said, "Well, that's a good reason for not going there." [LAUGHTER] "OK, I'll hire you." So he hired me. But I worked on the night shift.

IRITANI: But you were working with computers now.

E. IYAMA: Yeah, that's how I started in. But then computers weren't . . .

IRITANI: Not the PCs.

C. IYAMA: Nothing like that.

E. IYAMA: They were mechanized. They printed one line at a time. They were typing or punching cards.

C. IYAMA: They punched cards?

IRITANI: IBM cards?

E. IYAMA: Yeah, the IBM cards. That was the way I started working there. Then we moved over to San Francisco, then moved over to East Oakland, and then we moved out to Fremont, and that's the last place that I worked at the district office of Safeway.

C. IYAMA: How long did you work at Safeway?

E. IYAMA: From '62 to '83.

IRITANI: Retired from Safeway?

E. IYAMA: Yeah, I kept going and going.

IRITANI: '83 was . . .

E. IYAMA: The computers they had were big ones. They were not these PCs. Of course, even when I quit, when I retired, these computers weren't in yet even then.

C. IYAMA: That's why he has the difficulty with the PCs, because it's hard for him to transfer the knowledge he has from that into the little model that we have here.

E. IYAMA: The codes are different.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, everything is different.

E. IYAMA: The icons and things like that. The other one had commands that you give to do certain things. You know what to do then. If you want to do something, you give commands and you go there. But with the PCs you have to get a right kind --you have to get the window up, you have to use the menu and icons, you know, that kind of stuff. It's harder with this.

C. IYAMA: But I went to work . . .I'm trying to think . . .

IRITANI: As soon as you came back.

C. IYAMA: As soon as I came, I had the baby. And then I had another baby, Laura. I was active in the PTA. I had the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, you know, and then with Laura, the Camp Fire Girls--stuff like that. So active in the PTA--I was there at the PTA--also with the Human Relations Commission of Richmond. I was appointed to the Human Relations Commission. I volunteered as Neighborhood . . .

IRITANI: You were working in something else?

C. IYAMA: Yes, I was working in the neighborhood. They had--Richmond had a series of Neighborhood groups that met together. And I was really with them. We lived in Richmond at that time. I was also very active with the Contra Costa JACL. When my children got older, I did go to work part time. When my youngest daughter was about five or so and started

regular school, I did take a part-time job. Our daughter Laura was a very serious child--intelligent and vocal. She was very direct, and I can remember she questioned her teacher in the third grade when she spoke about Troy as being on the mainland of Greece--"But it's in today's Turkey" she insisted. She was a strong child, assertive and honest. This has been helpful as she went through UCLA and into a job in Pacifica Radio in Washington, D. C. Because my background was basically child development, I got a job with the Adult Education of the Richmond Unified School District. I had put my children through parent-coop nursery school, and I got to know the teacher very well. She was very encouraging. "I really want you to get this job." She left this job to take a position at Contra Costa Community College. I loved that job as Parent Educator. I had such a good time. But during the day I had parents working with pre-school children, and I worked with the kids too. So I had a part-time--a great part-time job. It paid well, and I had one evening class once a week with the parents.

[END TAPE 4, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE B]

IRITANI: Now you are working for Richmond and . . .

C. IYAMA: Contra Costa County.

IRITANI: Contra Costa County.

C. IYAMA: OK. What I'm saying was that Virginia Leonard, who was Parent Educator for RUSD before me . . .

IRITANI: Virginia . . .

C. IYAMA: Leonard. She suggested that I go to work at Contra Costa College for a position as an instructor--the Early Childhood Education Program. The job interview was really funny because the guy in charge of personnel was with the 442nd. He's a hakujin and he was one of the officers of the 442nd. So he didn't interview me at all about the job. We just talked about the 442nd, and he says, "You're hired." [LAUGHTER] But, anyway, they were very informal at that time. Now we have a much more formal way of selecting people. I had this wonderful job. It was just really great developing the department. I had to figure out what classes, had to write them all up, job requirements, help to staff the department, etc. I worked there from 1969 to '87. So I was there a long time. I taught and developed classes, and extended our services in our community. In our county there were whole areas of services that were missing for children. So, in my position at the college as Head of the Department of Early Childhood Education, we developed a consortium of all the agencies dealing with children into the West Contra Costa Children's Council. My friend Belle and I worked together, and we were on the board for a long period of time. It is really very successful--

still running. And the other agency that we put together was what we call the Therapeutic Nursery school. There were children who were falling between the cracks. The nursery schools didn't want them because they were too disruptive and difficult or they had all kinds of problems. We felt there needed to be a different kind of a school with a smaller pace and with a lot more individual attention. So we developed the Therapeutic Nursery school, which is now the West County Early Childhood Mental Health Program. And that has grown just beautifully. I was on their Board for a long period of time too. Those two I felt very good about. Another improvement in our college program was the development of the Montessori Program certificate. My friend Mary Suzuki, who was a very strong advocate of the Montessori system, introduced me to it. And she and I both worked in Head Start one summer when it first started, and I really liked what she was doing. So I brought that to our community college. It's the first community college with a major where students could graduate after two years with a Montessori certificate, enabling them to work in Montessori schools. The work at the college was very satisfying. At the same time I was very active in Contra Costa JACL. I was the newspaper editor, participated in all kinds of activities--I was Vice President and often in charge of programs. I worked on the campaign to repeal Title II, then

later we were very busy with redress. We got the City Council to back us on redress, and a lot of community organizations to help us. We are also both in the Democratic Party which in El Cerrito is probably the most progressive Democratic Party in California. And so we do some things in the city--El Cerrito. I was appointed to the El Cerrito Human Relations Commission. Ernie had worked on that beforehand with some NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] people to put it together and . . .

E. IYAMA: Ad Hoc committee.

C. IYAMA: Yeah. To present it to the Council. They accepted it and I was appointed to be on the Commission. I was chairperson of the El Cerrito Human Relations Commission for several years. I became the representative to the schools district from the El Cerrito Human Relations Commission, so I visited all the schools.

E. IYAMA: I was active too in the Richmond Human Relations Committee and in setting up the El Cerrito Human Relations Commission. I also became active in the Contra Costa JACL and served as President from 1989 - 1990, and in the Japanese American Services of East Bay, as well as the Northern California District JACL.

At my retirement in 1983, I was contacted by members of the NCRR [National Committee for Redress and Reparations] and the Asian Law

Caucus to help get redress for Japanese American workers of Alameda County who were fired after Pearl Harbor. I testified and we received \$5000. This led up to my participation in the Redress campaign, spoke to many community groups for their support. Chizu and I are still speaking in schools and community groups.

IRITANI: You know, we haven't even gotten to the historical . . .

C. IYAMA: That's right. [LAUGHTER]

IRITANI: And so what I want to do is to come back because we are out of time.

C. IYAMA: Yes. We have the time problem.

IRITANI: So I will come back and I will . . .

C. IYAMA: Sure, that's right.

IRITANI: We'll make an appointment right now.

C. IYAMA: OK.

[END TAPE 4, SIDE B]

[SESSION 2, MAY 25, 2000]

[BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE A]

IRITANI: I am in the home of Chizu and Ernie Iiyama again. Today's date is May 25, 2000. I wanted to continue to interview Chizu to see what she is doing now. What are your current activities--interests?

C. Iiyama: OK. I am still active in the National Japanese American Historical Society with oral history, on the Board of Nikkei Heritage, and in various other activities. I am currently working with an Asian Studies program at San Francisco State [University] with Dr. Kobashigawa and . . .

IRITANI: How do you spell --Kobashi . . .

C. Iiyama: Kobashigawa.

IRITANI: Gawa.

C. Iiyama: Gawa--like kawa. And this is the second semester that I'm working with him. We put on a workshop on oral history and I spoke to his class about what we're doing in the Historical Society and why we're collecting oral histories. At this point we are focussing on Nisei because so many of them are now getting pretty old. And so what we've done is

have his students sign up for conducting oral histories. In the meantime I have given them the list of names of people I have contacted who have agreed to have their histories taken. And the students then are asked to contact them directly. And the role I play is to work with a graduate student--kind of monitor their oral histories and also to follow up and to make sure that copies are given to the people who have been interviewed. So far we have gotten some very excellent--we were surprised at the quality of oral histories that the students were able to take on. Especially when you consider that some of the students are Chinese, South East Asians and white Americans, as well as Japanese Americans who asked if they could interview their relatives. So it has been working out very well. We're waiting for the second batch. We had 27 students sign up, but some of them decided to work together, so I have no idea how many interviews we will come out with. But we're doing that. I did that also with UC Berkeley. Several years ago, I led a discussion and presented a workshop on oral interviews with the Sebastopol JACL. I understand that this year they are embarking on an oral history project focusing on people in their community.

IRITANI: What do you basically tell them when you say why we're doing this?

C. IYAMA: We're doing this basically because we want to collect the stories of the people. In the past, history was seen as a collection of dates and events

and analysis. But we are interested in the experiences of people--their thoughts, actions, their perspectives. We make history come alive by taking oral histories. We found, for example, when we talked to the students at San Francisco State, that the students really enjoyed doing the interview and touching people's lives, people that they never knew before, will really never know afterwards, will never really have an opportunity to talk to these old people. For them it was a real experience; it made them aware of a lot of things that their reading of books did not cover. We felt it was very worthwhile for us, because we added their interviews to our archives for anybody who wants to use the material for research, or for writing and analysis. We protect the privacy of the people and make sure that anyone who has access to our files are those who are serious, and we protect the names of the people whose interviews are taken. We find that this is probably the best legacy that our agency can give to the Japanese American community in the area, because the stories are so incredible. Every story is so unique, and people have had such different reactions to historical events. Whenever we work on pictorial exhibits, we supplement them with oral histories.

IRITANI: Are these books kept there?

C. IYAMA: San Francisco State keeps their interviews in the Asian American Studies Program, and ours is at the Historical Society, in a special room.

It's available to be read at the NJAHS [National Japanese American Historical Society], but they can't take it home.

IRITANI: Not out of the building.

C. IYAMA: No, not out of the building.

IRITANI: Use it there.

C. IYAMA: That's right. We have had quite a few people go through it. We are also collecting from others so that it's not just our interviews. For example, I think Dr. Hanson gave us some of his interviews.

IRITANI: Down in . . .

C. IYAMA: In L. A. [Los Angeles]

IRITANI: Fullerton.

C. IYAMA: Fullerton, yes. We think that especially with the internet, it might be really interesting if we could also get access to the ones that were done by different museum groups or by you or by others so there would be a large repository available for the future. I know that Ros and I talked about that possibility of being able to delve more deeply into some things and having more than just our collection. I enjoy especially being on the board of our publication, *Nikkei Heritage*. I occasionally write articles, and in this next issue I have an article on a Japanese language school in San Francisco. I also help on historical trips sponsored by the agency. One of our most successful was Walnut Grove, because that is

such a fascinating community. We've gone to Sacramento, San Jose, Stockton, and Angel Island. We are planning to visit Fresno next year. I also work in exhibits, such as *Children of the Camps* and *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. I was the co-chair of the Women's Exhibit in 1990, which was picked up by the Smithsonian and traveled throughout the United States. This year was the tenth anniversary of the Women's Exhibit, so we had a very large and successful fund raiser. And, again, we honored women whom we considered pioneers in our community. I mentioned previously my work with the West Contra Costa Children's Council and Contra Costa Mental Health Group and the El Cerrito Human Relations Commission. I was their Chair for a couple of years and enjoyed that very much--for the City of El Cerrito.

IRITANI: What years were you on that?

C. IYAMA: I can't remember. It was about four years ago. I was Chair for a couple of years and before that, I was a member of the Board. However, ours is a very quiet community. I think we had four cases in all the time I was there--we had four cases in which to work upon apart from educational activities. We had a very good police chief and city administrators so that we were able to iron out problems that people complained about very easily. I guess the other thing that I am now is to work with the Latin American group--the people who are trying to get redress for the

Latin Americans who were brought into the United States during World War 11.

IRITANI: Latin American Japanese.

C. IYAMA: That's right, Japanese. Last year Ernie and I went to lobby in Washington, D. C., and really had what I thought was a very good experience meeting our Legislators. We talked to Legislators, and we were able to present some information about the treatment of Latin Americans during WW 11 that they didn't know about. I guess those were basically the activities that I'm in right now. Also, we love to travel. And Ernie and I travel quite a bit. We are planning to go to Japan again.

IRITANI: How many times have you . . .

C. IYAMA: Gone to Japan? Ernie, how many times have we gone to Japan? Quite often. We try to go about every three years or so. Ernie has a brother there and so he's got immediate family, which makes it really important for us to go. We want our children to come with us to get to know their cousins in the event that Ernie and I could no longer go. We feel the ties to Japan are really important. In the first place his relatives are so nice. They are so kind and friendly and warm. They come here too. And so we have opportunities to reciprocate some of the visiting that we've

done. This last year one of things that we really enjoyed was teaching at a school in Utah--Navajo children in the Navajo Reservation.

IRITANI: How did you get into that?

C. IYAMA: We got into that with Elderhostel. Elderhostel has a program--what they call the Service Program. It's only a week--short but exciting. We went to Utah and had a marvelous time.

IRITANI: What part of Utah?

C. IYAMA: It's called Mexican Hat and it's in the southern part of Utah. And, of course, the kids were really quite excited when we said, "Well, we used to live in Utah once too." when we talked about the camps. The kids were wonderful. This was the sixth grade and it was a social science class. I worked under the teacher, and we did some, I thought, really fun things with the children. We had asked Elderhostel what children learned from such a short visit. And they said what they wanted to do--why the schools had asked for outside visitors because these children are very isolated. "You're probably the first Asians they ever saw." They're isolated and need to know that there are people outside who care about them who are interested in what they are doing and share their experiences. It was just exciting for us. Our teacher was named Running Elk. He was a Cheyenne and he talked about his grandfather who was at Sand Creek at the time when the American Army came in

and slaughtered all the children and the women. His grandfather was fortunate because he was an infant, and he fell and one of the girls picked him up and hid in the bushes, and therefore they were saved. His grandfather also participated in the Battle of Little Bighorn against General Custer's army. I was just intrigued by the Native Americans and their history and culture. This school is in the desert, but the desert is beautiful as compared to Topaz, which I remember as being so dusty. This was a beautiful area, but very barren. And the children who were there were Navajo children of sheep herders. Ninety-eight percent of the kids were Navajo. The children were getting into drugs-- the older children getting into drugs and alcohol and dropping out of school. And so they--the San Juan District decided to develop an Indian program. A lecturer spoke about their curriculum. And they offered a program in which they used the talents of the elders. Elders and the children had been living in common, but used to fight each other. Well, by having the elders come to the school and share their knowledge about the culture and teach students native arts and skills, they learned to work together and share. They started off by building a hogan. They explained that the hogan was more than just a house. It was really a symbol of the Navajo people. The kids began to get interested. The elders first taught them weaving. They then got computers, and the kids took on the task

to program the patterns of the Navajo blankets with their computers, and then to make other patterns themselves, and then try to put that into actual weaving. So they are trying to put together modern technology together with the old Navajo arts. Our speaker, in charge of the Indian program for this district, stated that his program was so successful they began to teach ceramics, bead work, jewelry, etc., and included songs, music, and dances, as well as agricultural methods and sheepherding. Students and elders plus an advisory committee were really part of that school--elders, students, and teachers participated in the program. Because they were successful, they were on television and radio. Well, suddenly this Native American artist in charge of this program got a telephone call from somebody in Alaska. And they wanted him to come to Alaska because they were interested in his program. They were having the same problems with their children. So he went there this last summer. He found so much in common with the Alaska Indians and the Navajos. The Alaska Indian's language was very similar to Navajo language, and so many myths and stories were so similar. They realized that they came from that part of Alaska. In fact they told him that further away from the site there is housing that look like hogans in Alaska. This summer of year 2000, he has been invited again. It was fascinating just to hear the kinds of things they were doing.

IRITANI: What month --which month did you go?

C. IYAMA: We went in--when did we go? In May? or June?

IRITANI: It was not a summer month.

C. IYAMA: No, it wasn't the summer month. It was May. And it was, I think, a great experience. So we signed up to go . . .

IRITANI: Did you develop a program for that week or just cooperate?

C. IYAMA: We did both. And one of the big successes we had was the Japanese language. You know the Navajo language is so difficult that it was used by the Americans during World War II. The Japanese could not break their code because it was in Navajo language. Well, Ernie and I went there and they had Navajo songs written up. We could hardly pronounce the words. We were looking--"Oh, my God, we can't pronounce it!" It's really very difficult. The kids could pronounce it pretty well, but Ernie and I had a hard time. But they were very interested in the Japanese language. Ernie did a whole lesson one morning on the Japanese language, and they were just fascinated. It started off with--they wanted to say, "I love you." "How do you say 'I love you' in Japanese?" and so we explained. And then Ernie wrote in Japanese and they got interested in Japanese characters. They had a great time.

IRITANI: You went without preconceived ideas of what you were going to do.

C. IYAMA: That's right. We didn't know. . .

IRITANI: To develop . . .

C. IYAMA: That's right. The one thing that Ernie and I did want to do was to tell them a little about the story of the Japanese Americans during World War II. Because we were in like a reservation, but with barbed wire around us. I brought two books for them--*Baseball Saved Us* and the other one, *Bluebird in the Desert*. *Bluebird in the Desert* has a part where the Native American people come in and give the Japanese American internees some seeds. We wanted to extend bridges to them, and again to show that there were people who shared some of the problems during WW II that the Native Americans had faced. And so we signed up for another Elderhostel stint at Acoma Reservation. We were supposed to be there this month, but my sister died, and so we stayed home for her funeral.

IRITANI: Acoma is . . .

C. IYAMA: A-C-O-M-A. And it's in New Mexico. And they are part of the old -- part of the old Anasazi tribes that lived in the southwest until around 1200-1300.

IRITANI: Right.

C. IYAMA: And they disappeared.

IRITANI: [INAUDIBLE]

C. IYAMA: That's right. And they disappeared suddenly mysteriously, although now there are all kinds of theories about what happened to them.

IRITANI: Right.

C. IYAMA: But, anyway, the Acoma people are supposed to be descendants from the Anasazies. We'll go another time. We've also done--I think twice we went on archeological digs.

IRITANI: Right here?

C. IYAMA: We went to New Mexico. We went to a place called Ghost Ranch and that was fun. We were looking for 12th and 13th century Indian pottery--digging for shards, arrow heads and tools. And then last year, we went to San Diego to look for remnants of the Spanish period in the missions in San Diego. We found English chinaware, Indian pottery and dug in an old site.

IRITANI: Are these all connected to Elderhostel?

C. IYAMA: Yeah. I think agencies ask Elderhostel for help. Elderhostel would put it out in their program, and we would sign up. So we have found their service sessions fully as exciting as the other things that we go to.

IRITANI: All I have heard about--we haven't taken any Elderhostel sessions.

C. IYAMA: You would enjoy it.

- IRITANI: All I thought was that you sign up and you go to a university or some sort of program and you stay there and you learn--lectures.
- C. IYAMA: I know. It's not like that.
- E. IYAMA: You get lectures in the morning and you go out to the . . . Early in the morning you get a lecture on what you are going to visit.
- C. IYAMA: We look at the history, culture, architecture, and art, often the political and problems of the area. We feel it's really a wonderful program. We went to Israel on a regular trip for three weeks. It was one of our first overseas adventures that we took with them. We were one week in the kibbutz and one week in Tel-Aviv and one week in Jerusalem. They had such good lecturers. The best lectures I've ever heard was through Elderhostel. The universities I have gone to were great, but these Elderhostel people really are so interesting--they are people who have a working knowledge, and they are so enthusiastic as well as knowledgeable.
- IRITANI: They are living the life . . .
- C. IYAMA: That's right. It's kind of like how you are about oral history. They love it. Israel was really incredible. We found that most of our lecturers were Ph.Ds from Harvard University. We love Israel--Turkey--any of those areas because there is so much history. Ernie and I love history and archeology. Really, if I had my druthers . . .

IRITANI: You actually do the digging?

C. Iiyama: Yes. Well, that didn't help Ernie, because Ernie had problems with his sciatica. We went there and he had to screen the dirt. [LAUGHTER]
Yeah, we did actual digging. It's really fun. You feel like a real archeologist.

IRITANI: Right.

C. Iiyama: But it's just intriguing.

IRITANI: All the materials that were recovered, are they . . .

C. Iiyama: They are put together. Then we work at the museum. And we try to figure out by looking at it--the pieces we have found and having a guide to determine the period, where it came from, etc., so it's a learning experience. If you can, you put it together--a jig-saw puzzle--if you find enough pieces. Then this last year we took a river boat trip--the Danube and the Rhine River, and it was so beautiful.

IRITANI: You were on a . . .

C. Iiyama: This one was not Elderhostel--it was a river boat--wonderful river boat. We went with Golden Circle, and we loved it so much that we came home and when they announced they have a trip to France, we signed up, so we're going on a trip to France in July.

E. Iiyama: Because it's exclusively for our group--140 people, all of us--all in that same group so you don't have two--three groups on the boat.

- C. IYAMA: And everything is in English so that we could understand. But it is also very luxurious. I mean it's marvelous to wake up in the morning and find yourself looking out of the window and there are all the swans and ducks swimming right by. And the food was superb. One of the things about Elderhostel is that you never know what you are going to get. Whereas, Golden Circle is much more luxurious trip. I felt like we were going to a gourmet restaurant every night. The food was so super.
- E. IYAMA: The food was so good.
- IRITANI: Golden Circle is another . . .
- C. IYAMA: It's a private company for people over 55. And it's very delightful. And they also have what they call a Discovery Program, so they do have people coming in to talk about the places we're going to visit and what we should see--something about the architecture, the history, etc. So when you go to the towns, you really get a chance to observe more than just going in and saying, "Oh, isn't it pretty," You look for things, for details.
- IRITANI: It's not a, "Well, this is Tuesday so it must be . . .
- C. IYAMA: That's right. No, it's not like that at all. And both programs, but, of course, Elderhostel is more deeper into the academic subjects as compared to Golden Circle.

IRITANI: So how many Elderhostel or service projects or archeological digs--how many times have you gone to them?

C. IYAMA: We've only gone to archeological digs about twice, because we just discovered it. And we've gone to--oh, we've gone to a lot of other Elderhostel--regular Elderhostel. The last one that we went to was this year when we went to Houston. Our son is in Houston and we thought we'll go there for a week and spend some time to stay with our son. And it was wonderful in Houston. We learned a lot of things. I said I bet we know more about Houston than my son does. [LAUGHTER] They gave us the whole history. But it was interesting to us with how different Houston is--in ten years how it changed, from a totally white population to include many Asians, people from India, Mexican American, Blacks, etc..

[END TAPE 5, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE B]

C. IYAMA: Reading is one of my hobbies.

IRITANI: Basically, what kind of books do you read?

C. IYAMA: I read all kinds of things. Right now I'm reading a book by Joyce Carol Dates. Have you read any of her books? I enjoy her very much. I love novels, but I read a lot of non-fiction. I learn so much from it. And, I guess, basically, what it is, is curiosity. I really want to know about

things. I've been following all the discussion that have been going on in the *Pacific Citizen* and in the Japanese American circles. I saw *Rabbit in the Moon* and I saw the one on Fred Korematsu, which I liked very much. Incidentally, I thought they did a good job.

IRITANI: I'm sure they did too.

C. IYAMA: I thought it was very well done. I felt the *Rabbit in the Moon* was very one-sided, and that it was too bad that so much of it seemed to be anti-JACL. Because I feel that young people don't understand the kind of pressures that were going on. I can't imagine that our--I'm thinking of my mom and my father and all of our relatives. I can't imagine that they would be willing to defy the government and not go. I just can't imagine that they--the great majority of the Japanese would take that position. I will admire some of the-- young men who did that on an individual basis. But you couldn't do that with the whole community of people. I don't think the young people realize the fact that if we refused to go, that the Army would have come after us. I was reading one of the Bill Hosokawa's columns in which he said that at a luncheon Colonel Bendetsen was asked a question, "What would you have done if the Japanese didn't go peacefully?" And he said, "We would have sent the Army after them." And I do know that at one of the discussion groups that we had with Berkeley High teachers, and I was in the part of a

group that was doing confrontational groups in the '70s. Remember them? [Chuckles] Anyway, I was with a black psychologist, Price Cobbs, who wanted people other than Blacks to be part of his teaching group, so I joined them. We were in a discussion and this Nisei guy got up and said, "Well, let me tell you what happened to my family." He was a young kid at that time. He had a younger brother who got measles, and so they couldn't go with the group. He talked about how scared he was when his brother recovered, and some soldiers came with their big guns to escort them to the camp. And I thought that's probably what would have happened--they would have come to our houses to pick us up. There was a lot of disorder. But it's really hard for the Sansei to understand that because they don't know what it was like. And my feeling is that they don't know how difficult it was for people. I think of Mike Masaoka with whom I disagreed with quite often, but he was just a young man.

IRITANI: That's right.

C. IYAMA: People don't realize he just came out of college. What do you know when you come out of college? To have all that weight put upon on his shoulders. Where were all these people who are now tearing him down? Where were they? Because they were there too. Didn't they say anything? Did they do anything? No! And it's just really hard to see

the attacks on individuals. My feeling is it's about time we stopped attacking people, and realize that it was a terrible period--we were so young, we were so isolated, we didn't have a civil rights movement . . .

IRITANI: We were powerless.

C. IYAMA: We were. There was nothing we could have done. And I read these Tolan²⁵ hearings, and we knew that it was already decided we were going to be put into camps. But they held this kind of hearings as if that was going to make any difference at all. And so you realize that there was very little we could have done. We could have fought, but if we fought, what would have happened?

IRITANI: Well, at that time the adults were the Isseis and they were called enemy aliens because . . .

C. IYAMA: That's right, because they could not become citizens.

IRITANI: Because of their status. They could not become Americans.

C. IYAMA: I saw people like my father who knew absolutely nothing about how the American system worked. I didn't know what it was like until way later after camp when I began to get active politically that I began to realize, hey, there are things you can do. But we didn't know it at that time. We were all young and naive, and we also believed in our government. I thought that when the reports came out about what happened in Hawaii, I kept saying to myself, "Gee, did that really happen? Gosh, did that

really happen?" We just didn't know. We had no way of verifying what was true, what wasn't true. I think the Sansei²⁶ don't realize or understand that. And I could see where, and, again, I disagree on this. You certainly can make amends for people that felt that people who were resisters were considered traitors or something for not going into the Army. I can also understand why young men didn't want to go into the Army. It doesn't necessarily have to be just civil liberties, because I don't think we said, "Oh, I know some of those guys. They didn't want to go because they didn't want to fight." I said, "Well, that's OK, if they didn't want to fight."

IRITANI: It was their choice.

C. IYAMA: That's right, that's right, they didn't want to fight. And I know that when the War came around and my son--I was concerned. My son was still young then, but I was afraid that he might get caught into it. We went to a lawyer and we said to the lawyer, "How can we make sure that our son doesn't get called into the Army?" And he told us, "Tell your son" --he was in high school--"tell your son to write essays which show that he was against war so that he could point to the fact that he had this feeling way before he was called." And so we did that. That's because we had a little bit more knowledge of the things you could do and asking people

²⁵ Tolan: Tolan Committee Hearings ostensibly held in 1942 to weigh pros and cons of evacuation.

how you could do that. I didn't want my son to grow up to go to war in -
 -it was a colonial war; it was wrong. I could understand the Isseis not
 wanting their children to go fight the Japanese. I could see that. I could
 understand mothers not wanting [their sons] to go anywhere to fight,
 because you don't want those kids to get killed. We never felt angry
 towards the Japanese Americans, whatever stand they took. We thought
 it was just up to each person to figure out what to do. But it's still
 dividing our community, and I think, "How could people still hang on to
 something like that?" And I don't know--I'm surprised when people tell
 me that they had been looked down on. I said, "Gosh, I know some of
 these people. It never occurred to me to look down on people for
 something like that." So I hate to see that whole thing blow up again.
 And now it's come up about the Memorial²⁷, and Mike Masaoka's words
 and stuff like that, and I said . . .

IRITANI: Just one more . . .

C. IYAMA: One more thing. And then when you see the film like we saw last night-
 -the other night, "Behind Barbed Wire" and we saw these guys who
 went in and just really . . .

IRITANI: Just young kids.

C. IYAMA: Yeah, definitely. They were my age. They were like 20--19--20--21.

²⁶ Sansei: Third generation, a native U. S. or Canadian citizen whose grandparents were Japanese immigrants.

IRITANI: Or younger--17

C. IIYAMA: Or younger. I had a friend who was 18. They were decimated and had to see people shot and killed in front of their eyes and you think how sad that was and you see them now, and they're so old. How can people still be angry at anybody? How can people--why can't everybody let go of whatever it is. Do you think that there is still that strong animosity?

IRITANI: There is.

C. IIYAMA: There is, huh?

IRITANI: There is.

C. IIYAMA: We don't know anybody like that.

IRITANI: I have seen some of the veterans and . . .

C. IIYAMA: And they probably would have been unhappy with me too, because we were in the first demonstration in the war against Vietnam. We just didn't feel it was right. Certainly we were not for the Korean War either. Yeah, we picked our wars. [LAUGHTER] That's really what it is.

IRITANI: I pick no wars.

C. IIYAMA: At this point we don't pick any wars. I turned Pacifist. Wars just make things worse. But I could understand that whole anger against Hitler. We have Jewish friends. It was interesting to me when Ernie's group talked about the Jews--like what's happening to the Jews? I remember at Cal I had a Professor Lowenberg who did talk about it. And that was the

²⁷ Memorial: National Japanese American Memorial, Washington, D.C.

first time I ever heard about the terrible treatment of the Jewish people.

When we were in camp in 1942, we didn't hear about the death camps.

IRITANI: Was that before the war?

C. IYAMA: Yeah, and this is before the death camp. But they were put into concentration camps. And we heard about Crystal nights. I heard about that night when, you know, Nazis went around and killed and threatened people and shut down these synagogues and businesses. So I had no qualms about being for the war, you know, to change what was going on outside, but at this point, I'm totally against wars, like in Kosovo and including that Arabs--oh, any of them. But, anyway, we are very active politically. Oh, we are with the Democratic Party and occasionally, we'll do some precinct work. Our Democratic Party is probably the most progressive in the whole state of California. [LAUGHTER] We have some wonderful people there. And our Democratic . . .

IRITANI: And that is the county committee?

C. IYAMA: It's our El Cerrito . . .

IRITANI: El Cerrito City Chapter?

C. IYAMA: It's a very strong group--El Cerrito Democratic Club. We've done some door-to-door canvassing for local candidates and things of that kind. We are active in the local elections. I usually send out cards to people to suggest who to vote for and why. Again, we're concerned about

immigrants and what happens to them, the hate crimes, etc With high tech fueling us in the United States, we are revolving into a two-class society--upper class and lower class. Middle class is being . . .

IRITANI: Business class.

C. IYAMA: That's right. The people with the businesses--the people who make millions of dollars, etc., are growing and people who have less is growing, and you could just see that some day there is going to be a clash between the two. You feel sorry, because there are other ways of working out this difference. [Chuckles]

IRITANI: Well, we solved the world's problems. [LAUGHTER]

C. IYAMA: Oh, of course, of course! [LAUGHTER] When we get together, we do try to solve . . .

IRITANI: But you are doer.

C. IYAMA: Yes, we are. We do things. We do go on demonstrations. We do marches. We have marched in many things, you know. We write letters and at this point, I'm hopeful that the Latin Japanese would be able to get something. I feel so sorry for them--they work so hard. Grace [Shimizu] works so hard.

IRITANI: That's Grace Shimizu.

C. IYAMA: Yes. She's such a lovely person. And, you know, her family has received redress. But they are really working for. . .

IRITANI: All the others.

C. IYAMA: And that I like about her. I guess the others--I like to see Japanese Americans become more politically aware. We supported Carol Hayashino [Candidate for State Assembly] with funds because we couldn't go out to her area to do any canvassing. And we support Mike Honda. We hope there would be more Japanese Americans in the electoral process because I think we need to get them. More Asians to be our voice in Congress or whatever. At this point in our life, we're very aware politically and are willing to work.

IRITANI: That's good. Every community needs a person like you.

C. IYAMA: There are people like us. I think we feel very positive about this Yonsei²⁸ community coming up. It's now the Yonsei. The Sansei--the Niseis used to say, "But do they know how to do that?" We found they know how to do things better than we do, you know. [LAUGHTER]
They are much more . .

IRITANI: Absolutely. They're very professional.

C. IYAMA: They are. They know what to do and they are so well educated. For example, we have these marvelous lawyers--many women lawyers, I think, who are really tremendous. Sansei in the arts, the media, professors, engineers--also union organizers, auto mechanics, etc

²⁸Yonsei: Fourth generation, a native U. S. or Canadian citizen whose great grandparents were Japanese immigrants.

IRITANI: They are so much more computer literate than any of us. [LAUGHTER]
They are up on the top and we're not.

C. IYAMA: Oh, you know, that's so true. We have an iMac and I lost the--the AOL [America On Line]--icon and I couldn't figure out where in the world it went. We had to call Danny, a young man who told us how to get it back. It was just incredible. I said, "Wow, we know so little about computers." And you see these eight-year-olds--nine-year-old kids doing this stuff and you say, "Oh, my Gosh!"

IRITANI: My little grandson is going to turn four. In July he's going to turn four. And he told Grandma, "I want to work on the computer." I said, "You have to wait until Mom or Dad or your brothers are here." I was the only one in the house with him. He said, "No, I know what to do."
[LAUGHTER]

C. IYAMA: And he finally did.

IRITANI: He worked with his program. He said, "All you have to do is do that." And then we waited. "And then you have to put it on Daniel and Kevin's, and then put it on mine." and there it was.

C. IYAMA: They catch on so quickly. That's when I realized how old I am. I really feel old. For a long time we didn't have a computer and people would say, "What's your e-mail?" [LAUGHTER] "I don't have any."
They said, "What! No e-mail!" I felt so old and so out of it. So out of

self defense, we went and got an IMac. So now I'm going to go to a class, so I could learn how to make cards and notices as well as E-mail. My niece makes these wonderful notices. Oh, I'd like to do that.

IRITANI: You're still young; you can do it.

C. IIYAMA: [LAUGHTER] Well, it's pretty hard.

IRITANI: It's all attitude. Chronologically shows ...

C. IIYAMA: Because computers can be so useful. And they come up with such beautiful things. When I used to work at the college, I used to mimeograph--can you imagine mimeographing. And all those funny notices that I mimeographed. The new cards that I'm preparing they look so professional now.

IRITANI: Yes, yes. The world is changing around us . . .

C. IIYAMA: Very fast.

IRITANI: But you're keeping up.

C. IIYAMA: Well, trying to.

IRITANI: You're doing just fine, both of you, and so I think I'll just close it here unless you have some other thoughts.

C. IIYAMA: No, we're fine. Thank you.

IRITANI: Thank you both, Ernie and Chizu Iiyama.

C. IIYAMA: You're welcome.

IRITANI: I'll close this interview.

[END TAPE 5, SIDE B}

NAMES LIST

**Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Project
California Civil Liberties Public Education Program Grant**

INTERVIEWEES: Chizu and Ernest Satoshi Iiyama

INTERVIEWER: Joanne Iritani

COOPERATING INSTITUTION: Oral History Program
California State University
Sacramento, California

<u>NAME</u>	<u>IDENTIFICATION</u>	<u>SOURCE OF IDENTIFICATION</u>	<u>PAGE INTRODUCED</u>
Motoji Kitano	Chizu's Father	Chizu Iiyama	1
Kou Yuki	Chizu's Mother	Chizu Iiyama	2
Mrs. Amano	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	3
Kitano	Owner of Kitano Hotel	Chizu Iiyama	5
Toshi Yamasaki	Chizu's Sister	Chizu Iiyama	7
Kiyo Yamashita	Chizu's Sister	Chizu Iiyama	7
Masako Saito	Chizu's Sister	Chizu Iiyama	7
Sadako Kawaguchi	Chizu's Sister	Chizu Iiyama	7
Tamio Kitano	Chizu's Brother	Chizu Iiyama	7
Haruo Kitano	Chizu's Brother	Chizu Iiyama	7
Jean Parker	Jean Parker School	Chizu Iiyama	7
Ichio	Japanese Language School Teacher	Chizu Iiyama	9
Yukawa	Japanese Language School Teacher	Chizu Iiyama	10

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Mary	Neighbor Friend	Chizu Iiyama	13
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Takarazuka	Dance Troupe	Chizu Iiyama	16
Mitsubishi	Japanese Manufacturing Firm	Chizu Iiyama	17
Susumu Yamashita	Mitsubishi Employee	Chizu Iiyama	17
Yoshiko Uchida	Author	Chizu Iiyama	17
Uchida	One of the upper-class persons in Japanese Society	Chizu Iiyama	17
Togasaki	One of the upper class persons in Japanese Society	Chizu Iiyama	17
Frank Yamasaki	Chizu's Brother-in-law	Chizu Iiyama	18
Tom Kawaguchi	Chizu's Brother-in law	Chizu Iiyama	20
Morrison	Morrison Library at UC Berkeley	Chizu Iiyama	21
Mickey	Chizu's Sister-in-law	Chizu Iiyama	25
Dave Tatsuno	Sunday School Teacher	Chizu Iiyama	27
Koji Murata	Sunday School Teacher	Chizu Iiyama	27
Toshi Koba	Sunday School Teacher	Chizu Iiyama	27
Tad Fujita	Sunday School Teacher	Chizu Iiyama	27

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Tommy Dorsey	Professional Trombone Player	Chizu Iiyama	30
Monroe Deutsch	Vice Provost, UC Berkeley	Chizu Iiyama	30
Sproul	UC Berkeley Executive	Joanne Iritani	30
Franklin D. Roosevelt	32 nd President of U.S. (1933-1945)	Webster's Biographical Dictionary	32
Mr. Pierson	Hotel Tenant	Chizu Iiyama	34
Moto Asakawa	Kiyo's Friend's Sister	Chizu Iiyama	39
Spike England	Head of a Dept. in Camp	Chizu Iiyama	41
Lily Okura	Secretary to England	Chizu Iiyama	41
Pat Okura	Lilly Okura's Spouse	Chizu Iiyama	41
Rachmanioff	Russian Composer	Central Library Reference	43
Shinya	Apple Farmer near Sebastopol	Chizu Iiyama	46
Kiku Funabiki	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	50
Carey McWilliams	Author	Chizu Iiyama	51
Kazu Ikeda	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	51
Mineuchi Iiyama	Ernie's Father	Ernie Iiyama	52
Kimino Furukawa Iiyama	Ernie's Mother	Ernie Iiyama	53
Kikusui	Kikusui Hotel	Ernie Iiyama	67
George	Friend	Ernie Iiyama	68

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Wade	Alameda County Clk	Ernie Iiyama	71
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Yuki Shiozawa	Friend	Ernie Iiyama	73
Mary & Cherry Shiozawa	Friend	Ernie Iiyama	73
Haruo Najima	Friend	Ernie Iiyama	76
Ben Murota	Friend	Ernie Iiyama	76
Mike Okusa	Friend	Ernie Iiyama	77
Art Eaton	Head of Housing, Topaz	Ernie Iiyama	79
Lafabreque	Head of Social Welfare Dept.	Chizu Iiyama	82
Isamu Noguchi	Sculptor	Ernie Iiyama	89
Karl Yoneda	Union Member ILWU	Ernie Iiyama	89
Chizu Kitano	Progressive member	Ernie Iiyama	90
Tex Tsukahara	Progressive member	Ernie Iiyama	90
Hiroshi Saito	Brother-in-law	Chizu Iiyama	95
Yasuo Kuniyoshi	Artist	Chizu Iiyama	103
Taro Yashima	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	103
Miye Yashima	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	103
Mako Yashima	Son of Taro & Miye	Chizu Iiyama	104

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Eddie Shimano	Writer	Chizu Iiyama	104
Katherine Shimano	Writer	Chizu Iiyama	104
Joe Oyama	Writer	Chizu Iiyama	106
Sammy Oyama	Writer	Chizu Iiyama	106
Alice	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	106
Yuriko Kochiyama	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	107
Pete Seeger	Folk singer	Ernie Iiyama	108
Yoshiko	Spouse of Pete Seeger	Ernie Iiyama	108
Sono Osato	Dancer	Chizu Iiyama	108
Michi Kobe	Actress	Chizu Iiyama	108
Canada Lee	Friend	Ernie Iiyama	108
Nishino	Cabinet maker	Ernie Iiyama	109
Lewis Suzuki	Artist	Ernie Iiyama	109
Dr. Setsuko Nishi	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	110
Martha Graham	Professional Entertainer	Chizu Iiyama	110
Henry Wallace	V. P. of U. S. 1941-1945	Webster's Biographical Dictionary	111
George Wallace	Gov. of Alabama 1963-'67, 1971-'79, 1983-'87 Segregationist	Webster's Biographical Dictionary	111
Mark	Son	Chizu Iiyama	114
Patricia Iiyama	Daughter	Chizu Iiyama	115

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Mari Sabusawa	Spouse of James Michener	Chizu Iiyama	115
James Michener	Author	Chizu Iiyama	115
Laura Iiyama	Daughter	Chizu Iiyama	128
Belle Lipsett	Friend at Richmond USD	Chizu Iiyama	129
Virginia Leonard	Parent Educator	Chizu Iiyama	129
Mary Suzuki	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	130
Montessori, Maria	Italian Physician and Educator 1870-1952	Webster's Biographical Dictionary	130
Dr. Kobashigawa	Professor, SFU	Chizu Iiyama	133
Running Elk	Teacher Navajo Reservation	Chizu Iiyama	139
General George	American General, killed in Battle of Little Big Horn against Crazy Horse, 1876	Central Library Ref.	140
Joyce Carol Dates	Author	Chizu Iiyama	148
Fred Korematsu	Litigant, 323 U.S. 214 (1944) Convicted; In coram nobis case, Conviction overturned.	Central Library Reference	149
Col.Karl Robin Bendetsen	Authored E. O. 9066	<i>Days of Infamy</i> by Michi Nishiura Weglyn	149
Bill Hosokawa	Author, Journalist	Chizu Iiyama`	149

<u>NAME</u>	<u>IDENTIFICATION</u>	<u>SOURCE OF IDENTIFICATION</u>	<u>PAGE INTRODUCED</u>
Price Cobbs	Psychologist	Chizu Iiyama	150
Mike Masaoka	National JACL Director during WW II; successfully lobbied Walter- McCarran Act of 1952; Memorialized on NJAMF in Washington, DC	<i>Days of Infamy</i> by Michi Nishiura Weglyn	153
Adolf Hitler	German Dictator; (1889-1945) conducted regime of terror based on belief of superiority of Aryan race and inferiority of all others; annihilated Jews during WW II.	Webster's Biographical Dictionary	154
Professor Lowenberg	Professor at Cal	Chizu Iiyama	154
Grace Shimizu	Chair, Peruvian- Japanese Oral History Project, Activist, Campaign for Justice	Chizu Iiyama	156
Carol Hayashino	Candidate, State Assembly	Chizu Iiyama	157
Mike Honda	Assemblyman, 23 District; candidate, US House of Rep. 15 th Cong. Distr.	Central Library Ref.	157
Danny	Friend	Chizu Iiyama	157